

Copyright © 2013 Heath Shannon Rickmond

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

SANCTIFICATION AS GOSPEL-BASED HOLINESS

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by  
Heath Shannon Rickmond  
May 2013

**APPROVAL SHEET**

**SANCTIFICATION AS GOSPEL-BASED HOLINESS**

Heath Shannon Rickmond

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chad O. Brand (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen J. Wellum

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark A. Seifrid

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Jacqueline,  
the love of my life.

To my parents,  
who always supported me.

To my friends,  
for all the helpful conversations.

And to my professors,  
who taught me to wed doxology to theology.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE .....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Current Concerns with a Doctrine of Sanctification .....	1
The Statement of the Problem .....	2
Thesis .....	10
Method .....	13
2. GOSPEL-BASED SANCTIFICATION IN LUTHER AND LUTHERAN THOUGHT .....	16
Overview of Luther's Theology .....	17
Overview of Current Lutheran Theology and Sanctification .....	36
Current Justification-Based Views of Sanctification .....	38
Conclusion .....	47
3. GOSPEL-BASED SANCTIFICATION IN CALVIN AND REFORMED THOUGHT .....	48
Overview of Calvin's Theology .....	50
Overview of Current Reformed Theology and Sanctification .....	71
Current Progressive-Based Views of Sanctification .....	73
Conclusion .....	88
4. BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF HOLINESS .....	90
Approaching the Text: Tools and Methods of Interpretation .....	92
The Nature of Progress in Pauline Sanctification .....	96
The Nature of Progress in Sanctification in Hebrews .....	137

Chapter	Page
The Nature of Progress in Sanctification in John and 1 Peter . . . . .	142
Conclusion of New Testament Texts . . . . .	146
5. A GOSPEL-BASED APPROACH . . . . .	148
Introduction . . . . .	148
Evaluation and Synthesis of Approaches . . . . .	149
Theological Paradigm: Faith-Union and Justification . . . . .	153
Anthropology, Law, and Progress in Sanctification . . . . .	162
Summary of Gospel-Based Sanctification . . . . .	168
6. CONCLUSION . . . . .	170
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	179

## PREFACE

Though this work has my name on it, I could not have completed this task without the love, encouragement, and prayers of many others. Dr. Chad Brand constantly challenged me to be a better writer, and anything good in my clarity has come from him. Dr. Stephen Wellum continued to push me and challenge me to think critically about my position so that I would write my best arguments. He also taught me to love biblical theology. Dr. Mark Seifrid taught me to love Luther and, more importantly, to return to the cross for both my personal living and development of theology. Time does not permit me to thank all the professors and classmates who agreed and disagreed with me in personal conversations and emails. All of them helped shape this work, and I am eternally appreciative for their invaluable input.

My friends were a constant blessing. Specifically, Jared Kennedy and James Hollis had numerous conversations with me that helped shape my thinking as I wrote. They were two of my greatest encouragers because they were friends who saw and loved the same truths and wanted me to finish this work so they could enjoy it themselves.

My parents and friends back home always prayed for me. I am thankful Dr. King and Mac pushed me to do my best. I was “Dr. Rickmond” to Mac from the start of my program. My father and mother constantly spoke and wrote words of encouragement. Without their financial and emotional sacrifice, this work would have never even begun. Their pledge to assist me through this project has given me strength to carry on when I would have quit numerous times.

Words cannot describe my thanks to God for Jackie, my beautiful wife, who gently urged me to finish this work. Her tender care and nurturing was the last push I needed to do what I thought could not be done. Our future together will be even brighter

because of the completion of this work. She encourages me to practice the truths at the heart of this work, especially since she sacrificed so much as she cared for our two children while I finished this work.

Finally, I give all glory, honor, and praise to God for the ability and perseverance to complete this work (1 Cor 10:31). I have certainly grown in my faith and love for Him through His use of this work in my life. He has caused me to love the cross even more. He alone is worthy of our worship.

Heath Shannon Rickmond

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2013

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Mankind has wrestled with the concept of “holiness” since the beginning of existence. In the garden Adam and Eve hid their nakedness due to their guilt and shame because of their lack of holiness. They knew they were not clothed in innocence and that their holy Creator could not stand their rebellion. They ran from their holy Creator. God, in his grace, brought hope to those who rejected his holy word. Christians affirm with the angelic beings that God is truly holy (Isa 6:8; Rev 4:11), but Christians debate on exactly *how* this holiness may be described as it relates to the Christian life. What does it mean for a Christian to be holy? How can sinful man stand in the brilliance of God’s holiness which leads to his necessary wrath on all mankind? Is there any way for mankind to be holy and blameless before God again?

#### **Current Concerns with a Doctrine of Sanctification**

J. I. Packer states that “holiness is a neglected priority throughout the modern church generally . . . specifically a fading glory in today’s evangelical world.”<sup>1</sup> David Peterson laments the lack of academic attention given to the subject of holiness as well. Peterson, somewhat critical of Packer’s understanding of holiness, says that “his [Packer’s] illustrations beg the question about what really constitutes holiness in the New Testament.”<sup>2</sup> Peterson seems to think that Packer considers a pursuit of moral purity to

---

<sup>1</sup>J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 99.

<sup>2</sup>David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 11.

be the essence of a pursuit of holiness and that Packer would consider this pursuit to be an alternative to doing missions and evangelism.<sup>3</sup> Whether one agrees with Peterson or Packer is not the focus of this dissertation. Rather, the main issue is the nature of holiness and how that holiness progresses in the life of a Christian. Most Christians would agree that Christian growth is in some sense a dynamic process. There are differing and vocal approaches to making sense of the Christian life and how one grows in their spiritual journey. Packer argues,

Evangelicals today are disillusioned with what has long been put to them as “holiness teaching” (higher life, deeper life, victorious life, Keswick, entire sanctification, or any other version of the second-blessing theme). What they have heard now strikes them as sterile, superficial, stunting real growth and irrelevant to today’s perplexities and conflicts about Christian living.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to “higher life” teaching, this paper focuses on how the Lutheran and Reformed approaches deal with the nature of progression in sanctification in ways that are biblical and practical to every Christian. The approach developed here enlightens one’s theology of Christian living and encourages Christians to rely on the gospel for how one speaks about sanctification.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

The question is whether or not this neglect of holiness is simply a morality issue or something much deeper. What is “real growth” in the Christian life? The doctrine of sanctification is at the heart of one’s understanding of growth in the Christian life. How is the Christian holy and how does he progress in that holiness? Various Christian traditions deal with holiness differently. There have been several proposals for a Christian, non-Catholic position of sanctification.<sup>5</sup> Each evangelical tradition has

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 100.

<sup>5</sup>See Stan Gundry, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), and Donald Alexander, *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988). Both deal with similar positions, and both books discuss Reformed, Wesleyan, and Pentecostal positions. For the purposes of this

similarities and differences, but the main perspectives, which are briefly overviewed, are those of the Reformed and Lutheran perspectives given over the last few years, especially as it concerns a gospel-based understanding of progression in sanctification. Time would not allow for an exhaustive treatment of evangelicalism's, much less Christianity as a whole, understanding of sanctification in general. Others have dialogued on various positions concerning sanctification and such a study would be redundant and outside the bounds of the primary concerns of this dissertation.<sup>6</sup>

Several other theological subjects contribute to complicating this question of the Christian's progression in holiness. One must deal with some of the most prominent issues that come up in a doctrine of progressive sanctification. Some of these issues are the following: the relationship between justification and sanctification, the place of the Old Testament law in the life of the believer, the theological methodology involved in understanding sanctification as part of redemptive history and union with Christ, defining the essence of the anthropology of a Christian and how sanctification interacts with this essence, and defining the place and nature of good works in the Christian life. Time does not allow for exhaustive treatments of all these subjects in this defense on sanctification, however, one must consider the outcome of certain understandings of progression in sanctification in order to avoid error. Clear definitions of legalism and antinomianism

---

dissertation, the Reformed and Lutheran positions are most important. It is important to note Peterson's *Possessed by God* as another Reformed proposal. Peterson claims to stand in the Reformed tradition, but he says definitive sanctification, which is a focus on the believer's standing in holiness, is the focus of the New Testament material. Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 12-14. Peterson is not unique in his discussion of definitive sanctification. However, he is more concerned with a *focus* on the definitive aspect of sanctification and how holiness is achieved (and expressed) than most Calvinistic/Reformed authors. Peterson's conclusions are helpful in formulating a doctrine of sanctification and are mentioned in the chap. 5 of this work.

<sup>6</sup>For a helpful discussion on evangelicals' understanding of sanctification in general, see Gundry, *Five Views on Sanctification*, and Alexander, *Christian Spirituality*. This dissertation focuses primarily on the positions of sanctification that find their origins in the teachings and traditions of both Lutheran and Calvinistic thought.

must be given in order to avoid being susceptible to either of these unbiblical extremes. In theological circles that Lutheran theology has often been accused of focusing on justification to the exclusion of a clear and distinct doctrine of sanctification, thus the charge of antinomianism has been leveled at Lutheran definitions of sanctification. Lutherans sometimes accuse Reformed theologians of the opposite problem of legalism. There must be some definition of the terms “legalism” and “antinomianism” that both groups can agree on so that pointless accusations from either side do not confuse the discussion on sanctification and, instead, actually hinder the discussion on growth in the Christian life.

### **Important Contributions to the Present Issue**

When talking about holiness, most Reformed theologies begin by discussing the holiness of God Himself.<sup>7</sup> It is important to affirm that “God’s holiness is his capacity and right to arouse our reverent awe and wonder. . . . God’s *holiness* is his radical difference (literally, ‘separation’) from human beings, which arouses our amazement.”<sup>8</sup> God is different from any other being in the universe and this comes from him being the Creator, Lord, his various attributes of control, authority, and presence.<sup>9</sup> God’s holiness separates mankind, even in his pre-fallen state. For God to be holy means for God to be God. It emphasizes the distinction between the holy God as Creator and his unholy creatures.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>For a good example, see John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2006), 212.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Some may wish to quibble over the holy and upright standing mankind enjoyed before the fall, but this state of being is not the point. Even if man did have a temporary state of holiness, it certainly was not so much a part of being that mankind ceased being human when he fell. God *is* holy in his very being in such a way that there is never the possibility that he could be unholy. Mankind obviously did not have this type

This attribute of holiness separates and also unites believers with God. Frame says, “God makes us holy, which means that he associates us with his holiness. He brings us into his holy ground. So, we become his holy people, his saints.”<sup>11</sup> Nuances abound even from within Reformed perspectives concerning how this holiness is associated with believers, but most contemporary Reformed perspectives would hold to two (sometimes three) stages or aspects of sanctification: (1) Definite Beginning, (2) Progressive, and (3) Final (at death).<sup>12</sup> Each of these aspects of sanctification must be described.

All Reformed theologians in contemporary theologies affirm definitive sanctification in some form or manner. It is a position of standing of the believer with God because of Christ. Reformed theologians believe, in general, that this is a “single act of God that happens at a single point in time.”<sup>13</sup> Christians are “in Christ,” and because of this union, they “have been *sanctified* (past tense).”<sup>14</sup> Grudem emphasizes the importance of a “definite beginning at regeneration” and that this first aspect of sanctification is the “initial moral change” in the Christian’s life.<sup>15</sup> Though Reformed scholars may have different ways of describing the starting point of sanctification, they

---

of intrinsic holiness that could not be removed.

<sup>11</sup>Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 212.

<sup>12</sup>See a classic Reformed perspective by Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1958), 534. See contemporary descriptions by Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 747-49; Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 213-16; Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998); Sinclair Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 47-62; Anthony A. Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 72-77.

<sup>13</sup>Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, 213.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>15</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 747.

still agree that this “positional” aspect<sup>16</sup> is focused on the believer being “in Christ” and does not involve the actions of the believer any more than regeneration, justification, or any other facet of salvation.

Progressive sanctification is also affirmed as a necessary aspect of Reformed theology. The Christian is to live a holy life and continue to grow and live in such a way as to reflect Christ and the holiness that believer already possesses, because he has been sanctified (definitively) by Christ’s work. This progress of holiness is a process and involves a focus on the moral change in the believer’s life. Sanctification is expected to increase in the life of the believer. God enables the believer to increase (progress) in his sanctification. Of utmost concern is the removal of the pollution of sin from the believer’s life and the “putting on” of the holy character of Christ.<sup>17</sup> There is a debate among scholars about the usage of “cooperation” language when describing man’s responsibility in using God’s means of grace in sanctification, but all would generally agree that some type of progress does occur in the believer becoming holier.<sup>18</sup> This focus on progress usually involves some third use of the law as a means of grace for the believer. The believer is empowered to use the law and now has the desire to obey it because of the Holy Spirit working in him to produce holiness. The believer cannot take credit for his holiness, but still must take advantage of God’s means in order to grow in both his understanding and state of holiness.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Sanctification is “positional” in the sense that it is a “once-for-all definitive act.” John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2, *The Claims of Truth* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 277.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 748-49; Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” 77; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 534; Murray, *Collected Writings*, 294-304.

<sup>18</sup>John Murray especially dislikes the language of “cooperation,” and Hoekema agrees with his assessment. See Murray, *Collected Writings*, 227, and Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” 71-72. Contrast their positions with those of Grudem and Berkhof. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746-48, and Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 534.

<sup>19</sup>Almost all Reformed theologians discuss the means of grace as a way of

Final sanctification is usually described as the glorification of the believer. This aspect of the believer's holiness is assumed to be the final outcome of the process of sanctification throughout the believer's lifetime. It is necessary for the believer to persevere in holiness throughout his life and meet this goal in glorification, not on this earth. A Reformed view of sanctification would never even suggest the possibility of a "perfectionism" that could be achieved here in this life.<sup>20</sup>

Within Reformed thinking some theologians have made considerable efforts to stress the definitive nature of sanctification as primary.<sup>21</sup> They argue that while many of their fellow scholars agree with the importance of asserting a definitive aspect of sanctification, those same scholars just as quickly relegate the position as secondary when it comes to how Christians think of holiness. The *additional* focus for most Reformed scholars is to discuss progressive sanctification and how Christians become more holy throughout their lifetime by using the proper means of grace and executing the right works to show how they are combating the old way of life found in the Adamic nature.<sup>22</sup>

Lutheran positions wish to focus on sanctification as a part of justification and some scholars even deride discussion on a progressive element of sanctification. In

---

improving one's holiness. These means are necessary for the continual mortification of sin in the life of the believer. See especially Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 63-74; Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," 85-88; Murray, *Collected Writings*, 295-304; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 535; Reymond, *A New Systematic*, 770-78.

<sup>20</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 746; Reymond, *A New Systematic*, 710-12; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 536-37. The charts and comparisons concerning sanctification and other doctrines in the *ordo salutis* are especially helpful. Also see Hoekema's excellent and short discussion of perfectionism in Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," 82-85.

<sup>21</sup>The phrase "Reformed thinking" includes those from traditional Calvinistic backgrounds, whether they are Baptist, Presbyterian, or Anglican. See especially Murray, *Collected Writings*, 277-93, and Peterson's whole book *Possessed by God*.

<sup>22</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 13-16. See discussions of the "progressive" focus on sanctification in Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," 72-77, Murray, *Collected Writings*, 294-312; and especially Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 748-49, 53-56.

contrast to a concern for progressive holiness as understood by the Reformed perspective as it relates to grace, Forde writes,

Here we arrive at the crucial point. Here the pious old Adam can only recoil in horror from the thought of unconditional grace and try to protect the continuity of the old self by making compromises: some fateful mixture of grace and law, a little bit of human cooperation, perhaps the addition of a third use of the law, some heavy breathing about sanctification, and so on.<sup>23</sup>

Bayer and Forde wish to show unconditional grace in all its purity and are firmly in the Lutheran tradition. Grace is a pure gift and the gospel of sanctification in Christ must be expressed as such in their views. Bayer writes, “When we are sanctified, the meaning is that God himself sanctifies us by imparting himself to us as the Holy One, who alone is holy. Only God is holy, and what he says and speaks and does is holy.”<sup>24</sup> This holiness is shared through God’s word. God communicates his word and does not keep it to himself.<sup>25</sup> Forde’s main concern is the gospel of God in Christ: “What is at stake is the radical gospel, radical grace, the eschatological nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen as put in its most uncompromising and unconditional form by St. Paul.”<sup>26</sup> Forde believes that the implications of this theology of sanctification are important for both the church and the world: “What is at stake is a mode of doing theology and practice in church and society derived from that radical statement of the gospel.”<sup>27</sup> Zahl, who is more Lutheran than Reformed, agrees that grace must be

---

<sup>23</sup>Gerhard O. Forde, *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 9.

<sup>24</sup>Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 59.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, 8.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. The implications of theology are just as important as the theology itself. For instance, Forde praises the excellent exegesis of Rom 6 in Ferguson’s article and then critiques the same article for its description of the “Means of Sanctification.” He says, “Christian theologians have consistently criticized Greek philosophers for saying that knowledge of or exhortation to the good does not necessarily result in doing good, but then those same theologians turnabout and do much the same in their talk of sanctification.” Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” 78-79. For a similar critique of Greek philosophy in

unconditional and defines (or better to say he “preaches”) grace as “one-way love.” He says this love is the “heart of Christianity” and the “true voice of the Christian religion.”<sup>28</sup> There is no “synergism, or shared achievement, in the theater of grace.”<sup>29</sup> There is not so much a progression in “our own virtue or morality,” but rather a “growth *in grace*” as “we are . . . getting used to the idea of being saved by the grace of God alone.”<sup>30</sup> Forde goes on to say something that sounds radical to the theological ears of those from a more progressive-focused position: “Our sanctification consists merely in being shaped by, or getting used to, justification.”<sup>31</sup> As Peterson says in a similar way, “Sanctification is primarily another way of describing what it means to be converted or brought to God in Christ and kept in that relationship.”<sup>32</sup>

The problem is that there are two views of sanctification represented in the Reformed/Lutheran way of thinking. Bayer and Forde are a sample of scholars who claim sanctification is basically a “getting used to” justification and would be under the umbrella of Lutheran thinking. This definitive approach focuses primarily on how the believer has *already* been converted and is already holy in Christ. The other position

---

such thinking concerning the use of the law in exhortation, see Paul F. M. Zahl, *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 70.

<sup>28</sup>Zahl, *Grace in Practice*, ix.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>30</sup>Gerhard O. Forde, “The Lutheran View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 29.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. “Progressive-focused” means that the theologian (usually from the Reformed tradition) ultimately articulates a doctrine of sanctification that includes elements of progression that seem to imply some type of compliance with the moral law of God, commonly understood as the “third use of the law” as essential to Christian growth. Focusing on compliance to the “moral law” of God is *necessary* for Christians to be *better* in their faith. In this view, believers should grow in the gospel by focusing on Christ *and* keeping the moral law of God (though the Holy Spirit, given by Christ, is the one who enables believers to keep that law).

<sup>32</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 136.

represented by Reymond, Ferguson, and Hoekema is that of a primarily progressive-focused sanctification that accurately reflects the theology of their theological forefather, John Calvin.

The progressive element of sanctification is really what is in question and what is examined in this dissertation. Foundational to this discussion is also what is involved in a definitive understanding of sanctification. Does the biblical language include elements of “progression” in the believer’s holiness? If so, what does “progression” look like in both theological terms and in life practice? How does one’s “Reformational theology”<sup>33</sup> of anthropology, justification, and the distinction between law and grace also factor into answering questions concerning sanctification’s nature and the working out of the doctrine in practical Christian living? These questions are what drive the thesis and must be answered in order to understand how sanctification is understood from both a biblical and theological perspective as it concerns “progression” in a Christian’s salvation.

### **Thesis**

Holiness is bound up with a believer’s justification through and in Christ Jesus. Just as justification is a radical act of God creating the righteousness he demands by the cross of his Son, so is sanctification a radical act of God making a holy people for himself through the gospel act of the cross.<sup>34</sup> God does not need the Christian’s help to make the Christian holy. Man’s sinful will, due to the Adamic sinful nature, always reject God’s holy character summarized in his law. Since mankind cannot save himself in any way due to his fallen and sinful will, God does what he requires through Christ on the cross and the resurrection. The God-man satisfies God’s wrath for sinners. A Christian is always “simultaneously righteous and a sinner,” as Luther is famous for saying. Man is righteous

---

<sup>33</sup>“Reformational thinking” includes Lutheran and Reformed/Presbyterian thought.

<sup>34</sup>Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, 8-13; idem, “The Lutheran View,” 24.

in Christ and still sinful.<sup>35</sup> Justification and sanctification are *coterminous* and describe the same act of salvation from different aspects. This dissertation argues that, in keeping with the Reformation tradition, the nature of progress in sanctification should be viewed from a gospel-focused position that emphasizes sanctification as another way of looking at the central doctrine of salvation known as justification. For one to understand God's holiness properly means that one also understands the justice of God in making a wholly new creation by his powerful Word.<sup>36</sup> The best language for describing holiness is that of a "definitive" position that focuses on the believer's holy standing in Christ alone which comes with ethical progress. This view better describes sanctification language in the New Testament and exalts the monergistic grace of God as upheld in the Reformation cries of *sola gratia* (grace alone) and *sola fide* (faith alone). This holiness has no metaphysical progression<sup>37</sup> in the life of a believer, though the believer might progress in understanding and fruit of sanctification. There is ethical progress without metaphysical pressure.<sup>38</sup> Growth in the Christian life is a cycle of always returning to the cross and receiving a renewal of cleansing from the Savior.<sup>39</sup> There is a growth *in faith* for the Christian in sanctification as he continues to return to Christ and has a deeper and broader understanding of both his personal sinfulness and his holiness *in Christ*. There is *not* a growth in holiness in the sense that a believer becomes metaphysically "more holy" as he or she grows in faith.

---

<sup>35</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 242-45.

<sup>36</sup>God's kingdom is eschatologically coming upon believers in their new creation. Forde, "The Lutheran View," 28-29.

<sup>37</sup>The exception to this statement is the fact that the life of the believer ends in sanctification with the glorified state in heaven.

<sup>38</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 65-66.

<sup>39</sup>Forde, "The Lutheran View," 28.

The believer does not become “more holy” as he grows in the Christian life, though he should and does ethically progress in his behavior. Even the believer’s ethical progression stems from the freedom and standing in holiness that flows from the power of Christ’s sacrifice. The work of God’s law brings death to the old nature and points to the need of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his grace. The law is necessary for a proper understanding of sanctification, but not as a ruling norm for Christian living. The values of the Christian continue to change as he realizes the deplorable nature of his continued sinfulness. The Christian’s sanctification does not then involve a returning to the law as a means of moral progression, but rather a return to the cross of Christ so that the believer’s repentance might take place on a regular basis. There *will be* fruit that comes from repentance and faith, but any works of faith and repentance should not be confused with the believer’s constant holy standing with God. The *results* of sanctification in Christ must not be confused with the *standing* of holiness in Christ. This outward fruit is rooted in the cross and it often looks a lot like obedience to the law, but these external works do not mean the believer becomes more sanctified or becomes holier.<sup>40</sup> Instead, God possesses the believer in such a way that he spontaneously and necessarily produces fruit that comes from faith and shows the holiness of Christ’s Spirit dwelling in him.<sup>41</sup> At death, the old nature of Adam completely dies in the believer and he is conformed perfectly to the image of Christ and shows no vestiges of impurity.<sup>42</sup> The righteousness of Christ clothes the new body of a believer so that there is no question concerning the holiness and righteousness of the believer for the rest of eternity. With the old man (i.e.,

---

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 28-32. Also see Zahl’s practical discussion on how grace does what the law requires without the law’s help in Zahl, *Grace in Practice*, 61, 70-92.

<sup>41</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 136, and Forde, “The Lutheran View,” 30.

<sup>42</sup>See 1 Thess 5:23. Peterson says, “Instead of speaking in terms of progressive sanctification, the New Testament more regularly employs the language of renewal, transformation and growth to describe what God is doing.” Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 136.

Adam, flesh, sin nature) dead, Christians will always do what is right for the rest of eternity and never struggle with obedience to God again. The believer's sinless and resurrected body is the final result of sanctification in Christ.

The argument of this thesis is intended as a contribution to evangelical theology in that it shows how one should think and speak about sanctification as it relates to progressing in Christian growth, especially if one holds to a Reformed or Lutheran theology that focuses on *sola gratia* and *sola fide* as healthy components of theology that brings glory to God. The reader is encouraged to examine the view in light of several relevant texts that deal with the doctrine of holiness and those texts that are most used by theologians when considering the doctrine of sanctification. The personal backgrounds of Calvin and Luther are also examined considering their influences on present-day views of sanctification. Though both Calvin and Luther's thoughts are important for this discussion, the biblical language must give the parameters by which a faithful systematic theology discusses the doctrine of man's holy standing with God in Christ.

### **Method**

The research primarily focuses on articulating a biblical-theological approach to sanctification that takes into account insights from various Reformed and Lutheran perspectives concerned with more gospel-focused views of sanctification. The research compares and contrasts more "progressive-focused" views to those of more "definitive-focused" (or "gospel-focused") views of sanctification. In addition to these perspectives, important and often-used texts from the New Testament are examined in a thematic manner.<sup>43</sup> The passages used most frequently by scholars concerning sanctification give

---

<sup>43</sup>The greatest quotation of texts by authors in the discussion of sanctification comes from Paul's letters. Other authors also deal with the theological concept of holiness, but Rom 6 is probably the most useful and pertinent passage for giving the parameters of a discussion on the progressive nature of sanctification. After dealing with Rom 6, 1 Cor 1:30 and 6:11 are also explored. Eph 5:26-27 is also part of the discussion. The non-Pauline texts utilized to explain the nature of progress in sanctification are Heb 10:10, 14; 12:10, 14; John 17:17, 19; and 1 Pet 1:15-16. For more information on an

further direction for a biblical understanding of sanctification. The research starts with various positions, move to a discussion of the biblical language of holiness, and finally works toward formulating a helpful synthesis of the biblical and theological material that shows the validity of the thesis.

The primary concern of this dissertation is to deal with the biblical text and show the usage of “holiness” language as it focuses on the nature of progression in sanctification. The secondary, but no less relevant concern is to show that a consistently Reformed view of sanctification, a view based on the Reformation principles of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, requires a view of one-way grace in sanctification that favors a more Lutheran proposal of thinking about sanctification. At the same time, insights from Reformed theology are used to make this view of Lutheran sanctification clearer. Some of the more contemporary representatives of Reformed theology are utilized in describing both the views dealing with an “increase in personal holiness” and the more definitive views that concentrate on progression as a “growth in faith.”

The best modern representatives of holiness and the overall matrix for understanding the doctrine of sanctification systematically from a Lutheran perspective are Gerhard Forde and Oswald Bayer. The best modern representatives from a Reformed perspective are Anthony Hoekema, Sinclair Ferguson, and Robert Reymond. Extensive use of their various works shows how a systematic and biblical approach to holiness may be taken that supports sanctification as a progression as an outworking of union with Christ that emphasizes keeping the moral law of God as the primary rule of Christian living. Many of these authors have made helpful contributions to discussions about sanctification, but the implementation of their total insights have not been combined. The Reformed and Lutheran traditions have some significant differences in the way that

---

overview of Paul’s understanding of holiness, see Jay Jongsung Kim, “The Concept of Holiness in the Pauline Epistles,” Ph.D, diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004.

they articulate sanctification and the completed proposal for the nature of progress in the doctrine of sanctification in the conclusion of this dissertation refines and clarifies parts of each tradition that may be harmonized. Each tradition adds something that, when brought together, brings theological consistency and demonstrates biblical fidelity to the language of holiness in the New Testament. In addition to these contemporary Reformed and Lutheran scholars, the works of both Calvin and Luther are included in discussing these two different approaches to sanctification in history. It is not my intent to do a thorough investigation of Calvin's and Luther's views of sanctification, but rather to give some insights into how they might agree or disagree with those who claim to follow in their theological tradition as well as give a helpful historical background to the theological discussions of the evangelical church to set the context for how believers think and talk about Christian holiness, especially as it concerns "progress" in the doctrine of sanctification.

## CHAPTER 2

### GOSPEL-BASED SANCTIFICATION IN LUTHER AND LUTHERAN THOUGHT

Few can doubt the impact of Martin Luther on church history, especially as it concerns the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Luther and the Lutheran Church have said much over the last five hundred years concerning justification and the need to be right with God through Christ alone. There is still a question that looms large in the theological world for both Luther and Lutherans. Carter Lindberg asks in the title of his article, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification but Whisper Sanctification?”<sup>1</sup>

The first part of this chapter gives a brief overview of the key tenets of Luther’s theology, including his thinking on sanctification. The second part of the chapter is devoted to two key modern evangelical Lutherans who have written on sanctification and their differing views on the doctrine of sanctification. In conclusion, there is a summary of the nature of progression in sanctification that may be understood as “getting used to our justification.” This understanding of sanctification, in the tradition of Luther, preserves the distinction between justification and sanctification. This definition also stands firmly against antinomianism as it exalts the gospel’s ability to grant the Christian liberty to live a holy life. Chapter 5 evaluates the actual contributions of these positions from the Lutheran tradition as it concerns a discussion on the nature of progress in sanctification.

---

<sup>1</sup>Carter Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1999): 1-20.

## Overview of Luther's Theology

Though there is insufficient time or space to elaborate on Luther's theology, there is much that can be summarized concerning his overall approach to the Scriptures and the central matter of theology. In this overview of Luther's theology, four themes are found in Luther's approach and use of theology: (1) occasional theology, (2) a theology of the cross, (3) *Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio* (based on Psalm 119), and (4) the place of law and gospel. This overview shows how Luther's theological paradigms influence his understanding of holiness.

### Occasional Theology

To begin with, the problem is that it is difficult to summarize what Luther would say about theology since he was very unusual in how he presented his theology in comparison to many theologians. Luther did not develop a systematic or dogmatic theology, as had been the example of most medieval theologians and even many modern theologians.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Luther was a pastor who responded to the concerns of his day. In the words of Wriedt, "Martin Luther was not a systematic theologian. He did not develop and present his 'teachings' in concise treatises, logically arranged and secured to all sides. Luther's theology rather grew out of a concrete situation."<sup>3</sup> Due to the nature of the circumstances in which he typically articulated his theology from the word of God, he might be called a "theologian of conflict or controversy" more than any other type of theologian.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Markus Wriedt, "Luther's Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 87.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* Some writers on Luther have also called him an "occasional theologian" because of his historical context and how it influenced how he spoke. Timothy Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. William R. Russell (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 1.

His chief concern was that of sinful humanity's need for salvation. Lohse contrasts Luther's theology with the scholastic and humanistic tendencies of Luther's time: "What is new is that of all the questions with which theology must deal, the aim and goal in any given instance is the question of salvation."<sup>5</sup> Luther was not a systematic theologian in the sense of organizing his thoughts on various theological themes such as Calvin with his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but he was systematic in the sense of applying biblical teaching to all of life and setting forth the truth of the gospel to whatever situation confronted him at the time.<sup>6</sup>

It is quite difficult to formulate Luther's theology into a concrete system of thought. Still, it is possible to see a system of "distinct themes" that take on a structure as his work develops over time. A reader needs some type of map to understand Luther's approach to theology.<sup>7</sup> Other than remembering that Luther's theology was always occasional, it is important to remember that his theology was also a theology of the cross.

### **A Theology of the Cross**

Luther said at the beginning of his career that he wished to study theology by getting to the "meat of the nut," which simply means he wanted to be in Scripture in a deeper way in his studies.<sup>8</sup> Luther was consumed with the Scriptures and wanted to know as much as he could about the God of the Bible, especially as it related to how he

---

<sup>5</sup>Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, ed. and trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 35.

<sup>6</sup>Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), xv-xx. This definition of theology borrows from John Frame's discussions on theology. He says that theology is an "application of God's Word by persons to all of life." See his further discussion on the flexibility of definitions of theology in John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 76-77.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen J. Nichols, *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 69.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

might feel some relief from the plight of his sin. Luther's concern for salvation was intensely personal, not simply speculative. It is not by accident that Luther highlights the phrase "he forgives sins" by capitalizing it in Romans 3:25. Once Luther understood this passage, he said in the marginal gloss of his comments on Romans 3:25 that it was "'the principal part' and the 'center-piece of this epistle and of the whole of Scripture.'"<sup>9</sup> As mentioned by Lohse, Luther believed that the salvation of mankind was central to how one does theology. This concern for salvation as it concerns theology can be seen in Luther's preface to his exposition on Psalm 51:

The proper subject of theology is man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison. All Scripture points to this, that God commends His kindness to us and in His Son restores to righteousness and life the nature that has fallen into sin and condemnation.<sup>10</sup>

Althaus elaborates on Luther's famous quote: "This means that theological knowledge of God and of man is 'relative' in the sense that each is known only in relationship to the other."<sup>11</sup> For Luther, the only proper theology was a theology of the cross.<sup>12</sup> Luther desired to start and end his theology with the cross of Christ. One of Luther's clearest statements on the theology of the cross can be found in his *Heidelberg Disputations*.

In thesis 20 of the *Disputation*, Luther described how "true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ," and this crucified Christ theology is

---

<sup>9</sup>Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 18 n. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* [CD-ROM], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, vol. 12, *Selected Psalms 1* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 311.

<sup>11</sup>Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 9.

<sup>12</sup>This "theology of the cross" includes the entire gospel narrative, including the Old Testament preparation for Christ. See Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1 n.1.

against the “theology of glory” he describes in thesis 21.<sup>13</sup> Luther sees Romans 1:20 as a description of what one might believe, but not be a true theologian. The creation of the world, the works of God, is not sufficient to bring one to be a true theologian. It is insufficient for someone to recognize “God in his glory and majesty” unless that person also “recognizes him [God] in the humility and shame of the cross.”<sup>14</sup> The cross is considered bad and works are considered good to the theologian of glory. Luther, in using Romans 1:20 to describe those who are not true theologians, was saying, “What is now important is not the knowledge of God’s invisible nature in his works but the knowledge of his back side visible through sufferings.”<sup>15</sup>

God’s visible back side is seen in his humanity in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:25). The knowledge of God from his works and the knowledge of God seen in the cross are actually opposed to one another.<sup>16</sup> Luther says, “Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning visible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things.”<sup>17</sup> Luther says that it is only through the “humility and shame of the cross” that anyone may know God; his “glory and majesty” do the sinner no good.<sup>18</sup> For Luther, “The cross is the symbol of judgment over man and thus marks the end of all achieving of fellowship

---

<sup>13</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 31: 51-52. A “theology of glory” is a descriptive term for Luther that means any theology that attempts to add to humanities own glory by finding their own way to God. See Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 85.

<sup>14</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 31: 51-52.

<sup>15</sup>Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 25-26.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 31:52.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

with God on the part of self-confident moralistic man.”<sup>19</sup>

Luther’s articulation of justification by faith alone impacted church history in no small way. His theology of the cross is obviously connected to his understanding of how the sinner is justified. Luther’s understanding of a theology of the cross is bound up with his understanding of sinful humanity and the gracious gift of God’s promise. The sinner must know what he is: “A man should know himself, should know, feel, and experience that he is guilty of sin and subject to death; but he should also know the opposite, that God is the Justifier and Redeemer of a man who knows himself this way.”<sup>20</sup> Since it is “poison” to have any other theology than this theology of the cross, Luther holds to the justifying work of God through Christ as the means by which all theology should be explained and articulated. Since mankind is radically sinful to its very core, so justification and all theology executed by the Christian must be radical. Luther’s *Bondage of the Will* goes into detail on man’s depravity. Man’s sinful will brings him to sin whenever it chooses to do something on its own in its fallen state.<sup>21</sup> An extreme need calls for an extreme Justifier.<sup>22</sup> This work of God in justification comes apart from anything mankind can do. Justification comes by faith, which is “a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God.”<sup>23</sup> Faith is a passive execution

---

<sup>19</sup>Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 28.

<sup>20</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 12: 311.

<sup>21</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 32:92; 33. Also see helpful descriptions of Luther’s understanding of the bondage of will in Robert Kolb, *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). A shorter explanation of Luther’s and Erasmus’ arguments may be found in Gerhard Forde’s *The Captivation of the Will: Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*, ed. Steven Paulson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). Also see Forde’s short discussion on how a theology of glory promotes “free will,” while a bound will promotes a theology of the cross in Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 9.

<sup>22</sup>Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 17-18.

<sup>23</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 35:370. Also see Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 24-25, for an explanation of Luther’s understanding of faith.

in this sense. The sinner receives faith because that is all a sinner can do. A sinner has no will that will freely choose to embrace the way things are from God's perspective in the grace of justification. Someone who still holds to a theology of glory cannot properly grasp God's word. There is no room in their understanding for a theology that begins and ends outside of them. Again, Luther shows how the righteousness of God is bound up with faith:

Righteousness, then, is such a faith. It is called "the righteousness of God" because God gives it, and counts it as righteousness for the sake of Christ our Mediator, and makes a man to fulfill his obligation to everybody. For through faith a man becomes free from sin and comes to take pleasure in God's commandments, thereby he gives God the honor due him, and pays him what he owes him. Likewise he serves his fellow-men willingly, by whatever means he can, and thus pays his debt to everyone. Nature, free will, and our own powers cannot bring this righteousness into being. For as no one can give himself faith, neither can he take away his own unbelief. How, then, will he take away a single sin, even the very smallest? Therefore all that is done apart from faith, or in unbelief, is false; it is hypocrisy and sin, Romans 14[:23], no matter how good a showing it makes.<sup>24</sup>

When speaking of the teaching of grace alone (*sola gratia*), it is important to remember that grace and faith were inseparable aspects of salvation that came from outside of sinful humanity. Luther saw the certainty of his theology in the fact that all God does is outside of sinners:

And this is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from ourselves and places us outside ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive.<sup>25</sup>

***Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*—  
based on Psalm 119**

God's promises were Luther's hope. The promises of God were found in his word, which Luther held as the highest authority for all of life and godliness. In studying this word, Luther saw a pattern for study that he encouraged others to receive in the

---

<sup>24</sup>Luther, *Luther's Works*, 35:371.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 26:387.

construction of all theology. In his well-known preface before the Wittenberg edition of his writings, Luther makes it clear that his approach to theology is not the same as the Scholastic method of reading and studying the Scriptures. The Bible had to be read as a book with its own wisdom that countered human wisdom. Luther wished to humble human reason once again and exalted a theology of the cross as he promoted a very experiential and receptive approach to the Scriptures:

Moreover, I want to point out to you a correct way of studying theology, for I have had practice in that. If you keep to it, you will become so learned that you yourself could (if it were necessary) write books just as good as those of the fathers and councils, even as I (in God) dare to presume and boast, without arrogance and lying, that in the matter of writing books I do not stand much behind some of the fathers. Of my life I can by no means make the same boast. This is the way taught by holy King David (and doubtlessly used also by all the patriarchs and prophets) in the one hundred nineteenth Psalm. There you will find three rules, amply presented throughout the whole Psalm. They are *Oratio*, *Meditatio*, *Tentatio* [prayer, meditation, *Anfechtung*/trial].<sup>26</sup>

All three of these rules are interconnected. They “set out one single way of suffering and life, of listening and speaking, of thinking and writing.”<sup>27</sup> Luther assumed the authority of God’s word as he studied it. God’s word was to be believed even if Luther’s own words were doubted. Luther said, “Therefore if we teach anything contrary to the Word of God, neither I nor the church nor the fathers nor the apostles nor even an angel from heaven should be believed. But let the Word of the Lord abide forever (1 Peter 1:25).”<sup>28</sup>

***Oratio.*** For correct understanding of the word, the reader had to come to Scripture with a prayerful heart. The *oratio* [prayer] “rule” to reading Scripture emphasized the importance of dependence on the Holy Spirit and the need to “despair of

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 34:285.

<sup>27</sup>Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 42.

<sup>28</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 26:66.

your reason and understanding.”<sup>29</sup> Human reason was contrary to the wisdom of God’s word for Luther. Luther quotes Psalm 119:26 to emphasize King David’s recognition of his need to come to God for understanding of the Scriptures. When David asked God to teach him, he was praying for divine intervention in the course of his readings. Luther says that David “wants to lay hold of the real teacher of the Scriptures himself” when he prays to God to teach him.<sup>30</sup> Prayer was needed because the Scriptures were not a merely human book. Right understanding could only come from the Holy Spirit and prayer.<sup>31</sup>

***Meditatio.*** Meditation is the second rule by which Luther saw that theology should be studied. In meditating on Scripture, the reader was not only to consider the text “in the heart” in a silent way, but also by externally comparing the words again and again. Luther warns that if one only comes to the Scriptures a few times to reread the truth of it, it “will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is half ripe.”<sup>32</sup> The “outward word” is necessary for the reader to receive God’s Spirit. The word and Spirit must go together. The preaching, singing, hearing, reciting, and speaking of God’s word must be a part of doing theology.<sup>33</sup> Even though a sinner is justified as an individual before God, the Christian is not to be alone in his understanding of God’s word. Theology is to be constructed in a community of believers so that they can meditate on the Scriptures together. Luther was careful in this second rule to make sure he could not be misunderstood as a spiritualist or as a speculative theologian.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 34:285.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>For a more thorough discussion of Luther’s hermeneutic as it concerns the Holy Spirit and prayer, see Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 35-42 and Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 32-50, 80-82.

<sup>32</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 34:285.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>For further information on Luther’s interaction with the spiritualists and other

It might seem peculiar to modern readers to see Luther speak of meditation in such a way that links it primarily to outward acts, but Luther is actually “returning to an insight and practice of the early church that faded more and more with the passing of time.”<sup>35</sup> Luther saw reading and praying the Scriptures aloud as a good practice, especially as it concerned the usage of the Psalms in public worship. Meditating is not listening to human contrivances (turning ourselves inward), but believers “inner beings live outside themselves in God’s word alone.”<sup>36</sup> Meditating on the word in this outward fashion confronts human reason and false teachers. Any enemies the reader may encounter in this life are enemies of God’s word for Luther.<sup>37</sup> Meditation will bring some form of persecution if the truth is being sung, preached, etc. Meditation on God’s word naturally leads to the “third rule” for Luther: *tentatio* or *anfechtung* [trial/suffering].

***Tentatio.*** As Luther says, referring to *tentatio*, “This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom.”<sup>38</sup> Suffering is part of the Christian life and should be expected. Luther did not have a theology outside of a theology of the cross, which involved the suffering he saw in this concept of *Anfechtung*. For Luther, “Theological thinking and speaking does not occur apart from doubt and temptation, and faith’s overcoming of temptation; rather it is and remains a thinking within this process, that is thinking within the framework of *Anfechtung*.”<sup>39</sup>

---

fanatics, see Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 51-52.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 52

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>38</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 34:286.

<sup>39</sup>Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 34.

Spiritual warfare was a reality for Luther. Spiritual affliction brings Luther into the text and forces him to understand his circumstances in light of the word. Luther describes *tentatio*:

Thus you see how David, in the Psalm mentioned, complains so often about all kinds of enemies, arrogant princes or tyrants, false spirits and factions, whom he must tolerate because he meditates, that is, because he is occupied with God's Word (as has been said) in all manner of ways. For as soon as God's Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his assaults [*Anfechtung*] will teach you to seek and love God's Word. I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil's raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise. And I heartily grant them what they have won in return for making this of me, honor, victory, and triumph, for that's the way they wanted it.<sup>40</sup>

It is ironic that Luther actually sees himself as "indebted" to the papists because of their part in making him a "good theologian." For Luther, the "arrogant princes or tyrants" are his contemporaries who assault his teachings concerning the Word of God. The focus is not inward, but outward. Bayer says, "Luther therefore does not deny the inner realm, but here he puts the emphasis decisively on the external and the public realm, just as he did already when he introduced meditation as the second rule."<sup>41</sup>

Luther saw this spiritual assault as universal. These rules were not just for him to follow, but for all Christians to follow. All Christians should become "good theologians" by reading the Scriptures in the way of the psalmist. This spiritual assault brings readers into the text, which gives it universal significance. God's word interprets humanity. Humanity does not stand as the interpretive judge over God's word.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>Luther, *Luther's Works*, 34:286.

<sup>41</sup>Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 61.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. See Bayer's further arguments concerning faith and experience in Luther's thought in the "three rules" of studying Scripture. He shows how Luther is relevant for contemporary theology and denies that Luther's theology was solely influenced by his own experience. Ibid., 61-65.

## The Place of Law and Gospel

The proper place of law and gospel could well be called the “entire theological task” of Christian doctrine for Luther.<sup>43</sup> For Luther, “God’s Word is always encountered as law and gospel, never in any absolute form beyond law and gospel.”<sup>44</sup> In Luther’s Galatians 3:23-24 sermon on New Year’s of 1532, he says,

The knowledge of this topic, the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, is necessary to the highest degree; for it contains a summary of all Christian doctrine. Therefore let everyone learn diligently how to distinguish the Law from the Gospel, not only in words but in feeling and in experience; that is, let him distinguish well between these two in his heart and in his conscience. For so far as the words are concerned, the distinction is easy. But when it comes to experience, you will find the Gospel a rare guest but the Law a constant guest in your conscience, which is habituated to the Law and the sense of sin; reason, too, supports this sense.<sup>45</sup>

Luther found his freedom in distinguishing between law and gospel:

I regarded both as the same thing and held that there was no difference between Christ and Moses except the times in which they lived and their degrees of perfection. But when I discovered the proper distinction—namely, that the law is one thing and the gospel is another—I made myself free.<sup>46</sup>

The law and gospel are obviously different concepts for Luther. Luther saw their definitions and relationship as central to what it means to be justified.

**Defining law and gospel.** Luther loved the book of Galatians: “The Epistle to the Galatians is my dear epistle. I have put my confidence in it. It is my Katy von Bora.”<sup>47</sup> In saying that he loved Galatians as he loved his wife, Luther certainly was persuaded that the book was the closest to his heart. In his Galatians commentary he shows the importance of justification to Paul:

The argument is this: Paul wants to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, the

---

<sup>43</sup>Scott R. Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 16.

<sup>44</sup>Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 191.

<sup>45</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 26:117.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 54:442.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 54:20.

forgiveness of sins or Christian righteousness, so that we may have a perfect knowledge and know the difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness.<sup>48</sup>

In describing the righteousness of faith given by God, Luther often deals with Paul's understanding of law and gospel.

For Luther, the law was not something that could be separated into isolated parts. Luther understood that there was some sense of distinction as it concerned the classic categories of moral, civil, and ceremonial, but he saw those distinctions as unhelpful when talking about the law and justification. Concerning the relationship of the law to justification in Galatians 3:2-3, Luther says,

We are dealing here with the issue of justification. But there are only two ways to justification: either the Word of the Gospel or the Law. Therefore the Law is being taken universally here, as something completely diverse and distinct from the Gospel. But it is not only the Ceremonial Law that is distinct from the Gospel; the Decalog, too, is distinct from it. Therefore Paul is dealing here with the Law as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

The law is not helpful when it comes to the salvation of sinners in the sense of actually being able to save them. The gospel is opposed to law as it concerns justification. For Luther, the law is "God's Word and command in which He commands us what we are to do and not to do."<sup>50</sup> The command of the law does not enable anyone to believe and be justified. In the sense that the law demands and the gospel gives, the two are completely contrary for Luther. In reference to Galatians 3:19 in his lectures, Luther says,

When you deal with righteousness, life, and eternal salvation, the Law must be put completely out of sight if it had never existed nor ever would exist, but were

---

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 26:4.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 26:203.

<sup>50</sup>Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 36 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1908), 30, trans. Ewald M. Plass under the title *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 732. Luther says, "For the Law is a taskmaster; it demands that we work and that we give. In short, it wants to have something from us. The gospel, on the contrary, does not demand; it grants freely; it commands us to hold out our hands and to receive what is being offered." Luther, *Luther's Works*, 26:4019, kindle ed.

absolutely nothing. For in treating of justification one cannot put the Law out of sight far enough, nor can one center one's attention too much on the promise.<sup>51</sup>

While giving an exposition of Galatians 3:2 he says,

The Law and the Gospel are two doctrines that are absolutely contrary. To place righteousness in the Law is, therefore, simply fighting against the Gospel. For the Law is an exactor, requiring of us that we should work and give; in a word, it wants to have (something) from us. But the Gospel exacts nothing of us; rather it gives freely and enjoins us to hold out our hands and to take what it offers. But now, to exact and to give, to take and to offer are opposites and cannot go on at the same time. For that which is given, I take; but that which I give, I do not take; I offer it to another. If, then, the Gospel is a gift and offers a gift, it exacts nothing. Again, the Law gives nothing but exacts of us; indeed (it exacts) impossible things.<sup>52</sup>

Luther's theology of law and gospel required the Holy Spirit to help the theologian differentiate between these two great doctrines. Both doctrines were God's word and needed to be understood even though he admitted it was not an easy task: "Every person and all persons who assume or glory in the name of Christian should know and be able to state this difference."<sup>53</sup>

The two doctrines of law and gospel were very different for Luther and served as God's word in different capacities in the sense that they addressed different themes. Since both were God's word, one was not more dispensable than the other. The law needed the gospel and the gospel needed the law. God's character was manifest through the commanding and condemning law as well as the promise and grace found in the gospel. Luther states the difference between these two doctrines of law and gospel:

According to the apostle, Rom. 1:1-3f., the Gospel is the message about the incarnate Son of God, who was given us without our merits for salvation and peace. It is the Word of salvation, the Word of grace, the Word of comfort, the Word of joy, the voice of the Bridegroom and the bride, the good Word, the Word of peace, as Isaiah says: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good' (52:7). But the Law is the Word of perdition, the Word of wrath, the Word of sadness, the Word of

---

<sup>51</sup>Luther, *What Luther Says*, 740. Cf. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 26:5963, Kindle ed.

<sup>52</sup>Luther, *What Luther Says*, 733. Cf. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 26:4018, Kindle ed.

<sup>53</sup>Luther, *What Luther Says*, 732.

pain, the voice of the Judge and the accused, the Word of unrest, the Word of malediction; for, according to the apostle, the Law is the strength of sin (1 Cor. 15:56), the Law works wrath (Rom. 4:15), and it is a Law of death (Rom. 7:13).<sup>54</sup>

The law is contrary to the gospel, though Luther also affirmed elsewhere that the law is a necessary prerequisite to the gospel. The law functions to bring wrath that brings sinners to repentance and shows their need of a Savior. The gospel comes to those humbled by the law and forgives them.<sup>55</sup> Luther says,

Before receiving the comfort of forgiveness, sin must be recognized and the fear of God's wrath must be experienced through the preaching or apprehension of the Law, that man may be driven to sigh for grace and may be prepared to receive the comfort of the Gospel. There one should by all means most severely admonish and drive to repentance with threats and intimidation those who as yet are without any fear of God's wrath, are secure, hard, and unbroken. That is, no Gospel but only the Law and Moses should be preached to them.<sup>56</sup>

**Applying law and gospel to justification.** Justification by faith alone is a summary of understanding and applying properly the doctrines of law and gospel. While the law does not make one righteous with God, it certainly shows the need for the gospel of God's promise in Christ. Justification was the doctrine that penetrated all of Luther's theology. He said it was the "principal article of Christian doctrine" and that it was defended against all who would challenge it, even Peter or an angel from heaven.<sup>57</sup> Luther said this "principal" doctrine means that "we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil and are made partakers of life eternal, not by ourselves . . . but by help from without (*alienum auxilium*), by the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ."<sup>58</sup>

Justification is by faith alone, but it is not alone. According to Luther, works come with faith and must be seen in the life of the believer. Even though justification

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 732-33.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 740.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 738.

<sup>57</sup>Luther, *Luther's Works*, 26:106.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 701.

happens *extra nos* (outside of us) and mankind is passive in the sense that he cannot do anything to contribute to the justifying,<sup>59</sup> Luther says that “good works follow in fine fashion.”<sup>60</sup> Whether he “shouted” this doctrine as loud as some would like or not, Luther did hold to a doctrine of sanctification that rested on his doctrine of justification.

### **Justification and Sanctification for Luther**

Luther was very concerned with the bearing of fruit in the Christian life. In his exposition of John 15:3, Luther said, “That the cleanness of Christians does not come from their fruits; but conversely, their fruits and works come from the cleanness which they already have from the Word that cleans the heart, as Peter says (Acts 15:9).”<sup>61</sup> The fruit comes from the root of Christ in the life of the Christian. Some of this concern for fruit in Luther’s later ministry was no doubt fueled by his response to Antinomians like Agricola, one of his ardent followers. Luther was also concerned to stand against any theology where works would be involved in justification, such as in the thinking of Melancthon, another student.<sup>62</sup>

Agricola was a student of Luther around 1516 and found Luther’s theology of justification liberating. Agricola seemed to have seen only part of Luther’s theology on gospel, and neglected the use of the law. Agricola’s basic views were always the same from what can be seen in his writings. Brecht shows,

---

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 710-11. Luther is adamant about the fact that the whole procedure of justification is of God’s grace and a person receives God’s promises apart from any merit he has done.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 720.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 725.

<sup>62</sup>This dissertation does not deal with Melancthon directly. For a helpful discussion concerning the controversy with Melancthon, see Mark A. Seifrid, “Luther Melancthon and Paul on the Questions of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 137-52.

He believed the law's demands belonged in the past; a believer is converted, justified, and instructed through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. The continuing divine demand of the law—or even of ecclesiastical regulations—was no longer of interest in this context.<sup>63</sup>

After teaching at multiple schools and there seeming to be some unity between Luther and Agricola for a time, in May of 1537 Agricola came to Luther with a writing he wanted to have published.<sup>64</sup> Luther rejected his writing after at first approving it. Agricola was irritated with Luther and seemed somewhat confused on Luther's disagreements with his writing. Agricola presented a catalog of his previous teaching, affirming the importance of the law for civil order. Agricola still denied the place of the law in any context of justification and he would not permit the law any place in judging the conscience.<sup>65</sup>

Luther wanted to make his doctrine of law and gospel very clear to Agricola and anyone else who might have gotten his teaching confused. On September 30, 1537, Luther presented a sermon showing how the law was “God's binding demand” and how it “made man recognize that he was a sinner.”<sup>66</sup> Luther was very clear that a sinner needed the law in order to be saved and that “Christ offers himself as the mediator only to the man who knows that he is a sinner.”<sup>67</sup> Luther showed how the law had to be satisfied and fulfilled in Christ. The work of Christ was no good for anyone without the law coming and showing sin. The sermon also showed how Christ not only forgives the sinner, but begins fulfilling the law in him. This law is only perfectly fulfilled in the life to come, but the law was still involved in the Christian life.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup>Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 3:156.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 158-59.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

Concerning the law and justification, Luther said, “The first knowledge of the Law consists in this, that we see the inability of human nature to keep it.”<sup>69</sup> Luther also said that the law reveals the sin in man as man looks at God and sees how far he is from God.<sup>70</sup> Law shows the need for justification. In other words, “The Law is not the effective cause of sin; it is only the exhibiting cause.”<sup>71</sup>

Luther still believed that the law had a place in the life of a Christian as far as growth was concerned. The Holy Spirit now fulfills the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments had no power to condemn those in Christ, but they were obeyed by the Spirit working in the lives of believers. The law cannot demand and condemn as it once did. The Christian is free from the law in its wrath, but keeping the law must come through love and the working of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s life.<sup>72</sup>

As far as the doctrine of sanctification is concerned, Luther addresses those he calls antinomians by affirming that there is a sanctification work of God in the lives of believers:

My Antinomians are preaching very nicely and (I can think nothing else) with real earnestness about the grace of Christ, about the forgiveness of sins, and whatever else is to be said about the article of redemption. But they flee the consequence of this teaching as if it were the devil. They will not be caught speaking to the people about the Third Article, about sanctification, that is, about the new life in Christ. For they think one should not terrify or depress people. But, they say, we should always preach in a comforting way about grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ and that one should by all means avoid using these or similar words: Listen! You want to be a Christian, but at the same time you want to remain an adulterer, a fornicator, a drunken pig, proud, miserly, a usurer, envious, revengeful, malicious, etc. On the contrary, they speak like this: Listen! If you are an adulterer, a fornicator, a miser, or any other kind of sinner, only believe, and you will be saved; you need not fear the Law. Christ has fulfilled it all.

Tell me, friend, is this not granting the antecedent but denying the consequent? Nay, it is taking Christ away and bringing Him to nought while He at the same time is

---

<sup>69</sup>Luther, *What Luther Says*, 757.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 758.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 765-67.

most highly exalted by preaching. All this is nothing but saying yes and no to the same matter.<sup>73</sup>

Luther goes on to say that the Christ who redeemed has also earned the gift of the Holy Spirit “so that we might not only have the forgiveness of sins but also stop sinning.”<sup>74</sup> Sin was not to be the way of life for the Christian in Luther’s theology. Sin was certainly curbed to some degree by the Holy Spirit dwelling by faith in the life of a believer.

Luther obviously did not deny the place of law in the life of a believer, but he was very careful in how he talked about it. Luther was certainly not an antinomian in the sense of denying the importance of law in the Christian life. He did, however, see the law as affecting only the non-redeemed part of humanity. Mankind was still a sinner, even though he was also righteous. Luther’s theology of the cross and the need for a sinner’s humility came into significance when it concerned overcoming the sinful nature of mankind.<sup>75</sup> One of the clearest passages in Luther’s works concerned law in relation to Deuteronomy 18:16:

But here you will say: “You will find commands everywhere in the gospels and the epistles of the apostles. Therefore either our Christ will not be this Prophet, or His doctrine will not differ at all from the Law of Moses.” To reply briefly: The commands of the New Testament are directed to those who are justified and are new men in the Spirit. Nothing is taught or commanded there except what pertains solely to believers, who do everything spontaneously, not from necessity or contrary to their own will. But the Law is directed to the old man, who is dead in sin, to urge him on and to show him his sin. This is the true and proper teaching of the Law. Therefore the Law finds man not only unwilling but also unable to do what the Law demands. Thus he says here in the text that on the day of the assembly the people refused and could not hear the voice of the Law, and that therefore they asked for another teacher, one who would speak to them a word they could bear.

The understanding of this matter lies in recognizing and truly distinguishing the Law and the Gospel, that you may know that the teaching of the Law commands only what is to be done by the ungodly and lost, as 1 Tim. 1:9 says: “The Law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless.” But where the godly are, there the Law, which

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 726.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 27:230.

is intended only for the humiliation of the ungodly through the recognition of their sin and weakness, is already abolished. The Gospel teaches from what source you receive the power to fulfill the Law. In this respect it commands nothing; nor does it force the spirit, which hastens of its own accord by faith. It adds some commands, but it does so to kill the remnants of the old man in the flesh, which is not yet justified. From these commands, however, the spirit is free, being satisfied with faith alone.<sup>76</sup>

Luther did not believe the justified person needed any command of law for Christian living *except* in the sense of killing “the remnants of the old man in the flesh, which is not yet justified.”<sup>77</sup> Obedience to the commands in the New Testament was “spontaneous” for him. The gospel is the source by which the believer lived the Christian life. Faith alone was sufficient for living a life of obedience.

### **Summary for Luther’s Thinking on Holiness**

Luther believed that every Christian was a theologian. He believed that theology was addressed according to the occasion that was at hand. All theology had to be centered in the cross of Christ and studied by prayer, meditation, and spiritual affliction. The correct use and distinction between law and the gospel was at the heart of understanding justification and sanctification. Though Luther certainly believed that the law had a place in the Christian life, it was not the rule by which Christians lived. The law continued to address Christians in their sinful natures (“old man”) and the law was spontaneously obeyed as the believer had faith. The Holy Spirit worked in the life of a believer to keep the law, even though the law could no longer condemn the believer because they had been justified. Though there was certainly a progress in holiness in the sense of being continually cleansed by the word and a growth and showing of fruit, this fruit was not the result of some proper obeying of the law as a Christian ethic. It was rather by the Holy Spirit continuing to work in the believer’s life passively in such a way

---

<sup>76</sup>Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 9:179.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

that fruit would spontaneously show.

How have modern evangelical Lutherans applied the theology of Luther to a theology of holiness? Have they discussed sanctification in a way that echoes the words of Luther? Have they fallen into the error of men like Agricola in their attempts to uphold justification by faith alone? This next section attempts to answer some of these questions.

### **Overview of Current Lutheran Theology and Sanctification**

This section gives a brief overview of the approaches to sanctification in evangelical Lutheran circles. These positions do not describe every facet of what Lutherans are doing with the doctrine of sanctification, but they do broadly represent what Lutherans are saying. Bayer and Forde are at the forefront of the discussion on Lutheran articulations of justification and sanctification, especially on how they relate to one another.

After discussion concerning modern debates on justification since the 1920s and ecumenical dialogues within Lutheran churches, Lindberg says that Lutherans reject “any concept of sanctification apart from justification.”<sup>78</sup> He says, “The Christian life is not a progress from vice to virtue but a continual starting anew by grace, *simul iustus et peccator*.”<sup>79</sup> Lindberg also quotes Bayer as a defender of justification and sanctification in its proper sense. Concerning sanctification as “progress,” Bayer says,

Progress is, to be sure, made in the ethical sphere, in the area of works, in our actions, in our political involvement. But it is not absolute progress. It is ethical progress without metaphysical pressure. We do not merit the kingdom of God by working for it. It has long since been prepared. The concept of salvation is no longer a salvation concept.<sup>80</sup>

The *Formula of Concord* makes it clear that Lutherans uphold the importance

---

<sup>78</sup>Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification,” 15.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 65-66.

of good works. It is clear to say that good works “are done not by our own natural powers, but in this way: when a person is reconciled with God through faith and renewed by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>81</sup> It also says that the law is “a sure rule and standard of a godly life and walk. . . . The Law shows how to order a life in accordance with God’s eternal and unchangeable will.”<sup>82</sup> This “third use” of the law requires the Holy Spirit, but says that the Holy Spirit uses the law to give a concrete rule to Christians in order that they may do good works from a heart of faith. The *Formula* says that both sanctification and renewal are the same. In the third article on “The Righteousness of Faith before God,” it is plain that “in the same way the order between faith and good works must remain and be maintained, just as the order between justification and renewal (sanctification) must be maintained.”<sup>83</sup> Good works must follow sanctification, which takes place at the same time of the sinner’s justification.<sup>84</sup>

Pieper defines sanctification in both a wide and narrow sense: “In its wide sense, sanctification comprises all that the Holy Ghost does in separating man from sin and making him again God’s own, so that he may live for God and serve Him.”<sup>85</sup> He says that the wide sense of sanctification “includes the bestowal of faith, justification, sanctification as the inner transformation of man, perseverance in faith, and the complete renewal on Judgment Day.”<sup>86</sup> Pieper writes that it is difficult at times to differentiate this wide sense of sanctification from what the Scripture mean by “justification. . . . In its

---

<sup>81</sup>Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, trans. William Hermann Theodore Dau and Gerhard Friedrich Bente, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 547.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 558.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:3.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

narrow sense, sanctification designates the internal spiritual transformation of the believer or the holiness of life which follows upon justification.”<sup>87</sup> This “narrow sense” corresponds with what the *Formula of Concord* says above concerning renewal. In some respect, Pieper says good works and sanctification are identical.<sup>88</sup>

In his theological and historical overview of the third use of the law in modern American Lutheranism, Murray makes a connection between the third use of the law and how one understands both the doctrines of justification and sanctification. Later on, Murray shows how Pieper’s work, *The Abiding Word*, shows the Christian’s need for a clear standard for sanctification. Murray writes,

The Christian needs a clear external Law by which he may learn the will of his heavenly Father for growth in sanctification. Clearly, this is the third use of the Law. Here the third use of the Law presupposes an objective expression of the eternal legal will of God.<sup>89</sup>

In giving an overview of these positions, it is apparent that there are some serious differences in how one speaks of the progress of sanctification. The views of sanctification are similar in some ways when they talk about progress, but very different in others. The rest of this chapter focuses on what is being called “justification-based” approaches concerning the nature of progression in sanctification.

### **Current Justification-Based Views of Sanctification**

Both Forde and Bayer are Lutherans who share a great love for justification and see sanctification as referring to justification. God is the one who totally justifies and sanctifies the sinner saved by grace. Both theologians emphasize the teaching of Luther and Scripture. Unlike some of the positions mentioned previously, there is little credence given to any extra-biblical writings other than those of Luther. For Forde and Bayer,

---

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 4

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>89</sup>Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God*, 14.

being Lutheran means adhering to what the Scripture says and what Luther affirmed the Scriptures as saying. In both of their positions, it is obvious that justification permeates all their thoughts on the doctrine of sanctification. Even so, neither theologian denies the need for some form of progress in the doctrine of sanctification. The Christian must be changed in some form or fashion so that the work of Christ in him may be visible to the watching world. Though Forde was an American Lutheran and Bayer is a German Lutheran, it is obvious that the two share a similar doctrine of sanctification and how it progresses in the Christian life.

### **Oswald Bayer and Sanctification**

Bayer, in true Luther fashion, responds to a particular occasion when he addresses the subject of sanctification. He believes Pietism and the Enlightenment have influenced the modern age heavily and this influence creates a subjective focus on doctrines like sanctification. He does not deny that Luther had a concern for personal and individual development. Bayer quotes Luther as being more concerned about the priority of the objective word of God.<sup>90</sup> Bayer emphasizes Luther's focus on justification as a finished work that comes by faith alone. It is a finished work that already gives new life to the believer: "When . . . Luther speaks about 'sanctification' he simply talks about justification. Justification and sanctification are not for him two separate acts that we can distinguish, as though sanctification follows after justification, and has to do so."<sup>91</sup>

For Bayer, Luther stresses the institutional side of the event of justification to describe sanctification. Bayer shows how Luther describes Christians "as saints, as those who are 'called' by God the Holy Spirit."<sup>92</sup> Bayer stresses,

---

<sup>90</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 58. See Luther, *Luther's Works*, 36:39.

<sup>91</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 58-59.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

When we are sanctified, the meaning is that God himself sanctifies us by imparting himself to us as the Holy One, who alone is holy. Only God is holy, and what he says and speaks and does is holy. This is how God's holiness works, which he does not keep to himself, but communicates by sharing it.<sup>93</sup>

The oral word of God is what sanctifies the Christian.

Bayer also shows how Luther talks about the Church, economy, and political sphere as various institutions that are a part of sanctification.<sup>94</sup> These three institutions have been corrupted to some degree by the fall, but God still uses them to sanctify believers. Faith alone is the means by which sinners may be sanctified by any institution ordained by God's word.<sup>95</sup>

Sanctification may be rightly understood within the context of three estates because Christians grow in their understanding of their responsibility in and to the world.<sup>96</sup> Bayer combines the context of the three estates along with Luther's understanding of time to show how Luther "perceives the world and himself with a peculiar overlapping and intertwining of the times such as we find in Romans 8:19-23. The future of the world emerges from God's presence."<sup>97</sup> Bayer shows,

God's new creation makes the existing world old and restores the original world. The salvation that God imparts today guarantees the approaching consummation of the world and enables us to experience with sorrow the contradiction between the suffering and sighing creatures of the old world and the creation that is promised, the original world.

This concept of time relies on Luther's understanding of the promise of God, not some progressive concept of time with its roots in the period since the French Revolution.<sup>98</sup> This "intertwining of non-simultaneous times is hard to conceive of, and

---

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 60-62.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 64-65.

also more especially, to live in.”<sup>99</sup> Bayer’s point is that Luther’s understanding of creation and history creates an understanding of sanctification that is opposed to “the modern concept of progress.”<sup>100</sup> However, Bayer does emphasize that this understanding of creation and history is not opposed to justification going in a certain direction.

Bayer shows how Luther believes “some progress” can actually be made in life in the sense of changing from the old nature to the new nature in Christ.<sup>101</sup> This progress will be perfected in the “future life” in heaven, but, Bayer says,

Progress is, to be sure, made in the ethical sphere, in the area of works, in our actions, in our political involvement. But it is not absolute progress. It is ethical progress without metaphysical pressure. We do not merit the kingdom of God by working for it.<sup>102</sup>

The kingdom has already been prepared for Christians by God. In this sense, “The concept of progress is no longer a salvation concept.”<sup>103</sup> This progress does away with political fanaticism (God is bringing in His kingdom) and is secular progress. There are “small but definite steps” involved, but a secular progress satisfies itself with “what lies at hand.” Controlling the future is not the goal of secular progress. The “hope for the future” that Luther can enjoy is that God’s promises are true. Bayer states how Luther returns to his baptism for comfort. Baptism represents the best things God promises.<sup>104</sup> Returning to baptism reminds the believer of the work God has done on Christians’ behalf and how it does not get any better in this wicked world than to know that God will keep His promises to bring in a new creation.

---

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid. See Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 31:358.

<sup>102</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 65-66.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

Bayer shows how law and gospel are important for sanctification by saying both Christians and unbelievers need the law. The law addresses the old sinful nature. The justified still needs this law to address the part of him that is part of the old world.<sup>105</sup> The gospel is what Christians need to hear. In the new nature, the gospel has given life. This “alien” righteousness is never truly belonging to the Christian, which is why even the devout are not able to observe their “growth in faith and love.”<sup>106</sup> For a Christian to try and observe righteousness in themselves would be for him to contradict the gospel. There is spontaneity in the new obedience granted by faith that keeps the Christian from boasting in his own abilities. The Christian’s self-will will always be punished and slain by the law, but he will always receive comfort in the gospel by receiving power to live by faith.<sup>107</sup>

### **Gerhard Forde and Sanctification**

Gerhard Forde does not really seem to like talking about sanctification or the third use of the law. It is ironic that he would have something to say about sanctification at all. Forde does not like to talk about “progress” in terms of sanctification. It seems that he is reacting against Pieper and others who want to maintain a third use of the law and a somewhat strong distinction between justification and sanctification.<sup>108</sup> Forde loves the unconditional grace shown in justification and wants to guard it. He seems to also believe that some views of sanctification are no better than “heavy breathing”:

Here we arrive at the crucial point. Here the pious old Adam can only recoil in horror from the thought of unconditional grace and try to protect the continuity of the old self by making compromises: some fateful mixture of grace and law, a little

---

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>See Pieper’s full description on sanctification and good works in Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3-86.

bit of human cooperation, perhaps the addition of a third use of the law, some heavy breathing about sanctification, and so on.<sup>109</sup>

Forde has no desire to compromise the gospel, but he does have something to say about the “heavy breathing about sanctification”:

Sanctification, if it is to be spoken of as something other than justification, is perhaps best defined as the art of getting used to the unconditional justification wrought by the grace of God for Jesus’ sake. . . It is what happens when we are grasped by the fact that God alone justifies. It is being made holy, and as such, it is not our work.”<sup>110</sup>

Sanctification is “the new life arising from the catastrophe suffered by the old upon hearing that God alone saves.”<sup>111</sup> Forde even goes so far to say that “it *is* the justified life.”<sup>112</sup> Living morally is not sanctification. He admits that it is important to live morally, but this living should never be confused with sanctification.<sup>113</sup> Forde is reacting against views that say sanctification is basically the Christian’s response to God’s work of justification. God saves the Christian so he can then be holy.<sup>114</sup> Forde says that this view of sanctification is a kind of “apology” for the free grace offered in justification. He calls this kind of thinking on sanctification “disastrous” and denies the separation between justification and sanctification. He focuses on how God is the acting subject in sanctification. This focus protects sanctification from falling into some type of acting on the law in the Christian life.<sup>115</sup>

In his discussion on justification as it relates to sanctification, Forde says the old being is killed by the justifying act of God. He says the unconditional promise of

---

<sup>109</sup>Forde, *A More Radical Gospel*, 9.

<sup>110</sup>Forde, “The Lutheran View,” 13.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 15

God in justification is calling forth a new being.<sup>116</sup> The new being, of course, finds its center in Christ, being united with Him in his death and resurrection. For Forde, the Christian needs to return to where he died, in the death of Christ, not return to the conditionality of the law.<sup>117</sup>

In his comments on Romans 6:1-11, Forde makes it clear that moral progress and following the law is not what happens in sanctification. The focus of the passage is that the believer has died. The believer is now dead to sin. Forde says, “Christ becomes our life.”<sup>118</sup> This life becomes possible through faith connecting the believer to the unconditional promise of God. The Spirit brings faith and unconditional grace is then grasped.<sup>119</sup>

Forde sees Luther’s thoughts on being righteous and a sinner at the same time as one of the answers to the “problems” in the discussion of sanctification. Just as believers are already justified, so are they already sanctified. Believers need to realize that salvific reality, according to Forde, so that they are not tempted to fall back into the conditionality that makes them more concerned with law and progress as this age defines them.<sup>120</sup>

As he continues to talk about justification and sanctification, Forde says, “Sanctification is thus included in justification as a total state. True sanctification is at the outset simply to believe that God has taken charge of the matter.”<sup>121</sup> Nothing good or bad the sinner can do will make him holy and right with God: “Sanctification is not a

---

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 27.

repair job. God is after something new. He wants his creation back as new as when it came from his hand.”<sup>122</sup>

In his discussion on progress in sanctification, Forde does admit there is a sense in which believers should talk about growth and progress. He returns to his definition of sanctification as the “art of getting used to our justification” and says, “There is a kind of growth and progress, it is to be hoped, but it is growth in grace—a growth in coming to be captivated more and more, if we can so speak, by the totality, the unconditionality of the grace of God.”<sup>123</sup> This progress is understood by the believer transferring from death to life, being something new.

Forde sees two aspects to the transition between the old and new life. The first is found in “always starting fresh.”<sup>124</sup> He refers to Luther by saying Luther holds to a progress that “is always to begin again.”<sup>125</sup> Christ has to carry the sinner totally. The progress comes in returning to the realization that Christ alone can carry the sinner. The “transition is therefore not a continuous or steady progress of the sort we could recognize. It is rather more like and oscillation between beginning and end in which both are always equally near.”<sup>126</sup> Forde compares sanctification to two lovers who can never get over the fact of the miracle of love. They say it over and over again.<sup>127</sup>

The second aspect of transition for Forde is “that all our ordinary views of progress and growth are turned upside down. It is not that we are somehow moving

---

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid. See Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 15 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 128.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

toward the goal, but rather that the goal is moving closer and closer to us.”<sup>128</sup> Believers’ unbelief is destroyed and they come to see the light at the end of tunnel and “trust God rather than ourselves.”<sup>129</sup>

Forde says that sanctification involves a spontaneous love for one’s neighbor. It involves caring about both one’s neighbor and the society. Morality and virtue are important, but not as it concerns salvation. Part of sanctification is also living out one’s vocation faithfully:

The magnificent hot-air balloon syndrome seduces us into thinking our sanctification consists in following lists of pious does and don’ts. That always seems more holy. But it is in the nitty-gritty of daily life and its task that our sanctification is hammered out.<sup>130</sup>

Last, Forde says that it is necessary for Christians to be “truthful and lucid about the way things really are for us.”<sup>131</sup> Humility and humor seem to go a long way for Forde. Christians need to be honest with themselves concerning how sinful they really are. He concludes with some reflective comments on his own Christian journey:

As I get a little older and death draws nearer, it doesn’t seem to get any easier. I get a little more impatient, a little more slower, harder to move, a little more sedentary and set in my ways. It seems more and more unjust to me that now I have spent a good part of my life ‘getting to the top,’ and I seem just about to have made it, I am already slowing down, already on the way out. A skiing injury from when I was sixteen years old acts up if I overexert myself. I am too heavy, the doctors tell me, but it is so hard to lose weight! Am I making progress? Well, maybe it *seems* as though I sin less, but that may only be because I’m getting tired! It’s just too hard to keep indulging the lusts of youth. Is that sanctification? I wouldn’t think so! One should not, I expect, mistake encroaching senility for sanctification!<sup>132</sup>

Forde believes sanctification is wholly depending on Christ and has been accomplished based on faith. He understands growth in grace and progress in

---

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 31

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

sanctification to be a returning and grasping anew the grace of God in the promise of justification. It is still necessary to show good works, but good works flow from a spontaneous nature that cares for one's neighbor and society, not by trying to return to the "conditionality" of the law.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how Luther, as well as Bayer and Forde, hold to a view of sanctification that exalts the righteousness of God in Christ. All three of these theologians see justification as the overarching theme of the Scriptures and celebrate the promise of God from the word that comes in faith. Luther makes it very clear that there is no room in Christian theology to abandon the place of law in the Christian life. The law still must deal with the old man (sin nature). Good works are necessary in the Christian life for all three theologians. Good works come as a result of God's justifying work in Christ. Sanctification is co-terminus with justification, though it can still be distinguished in some ways. Though justification brings unconditional grace to sinners, there is no room for licentiousness and an insipid antinomianism in the preaching of justification. Sanctification reminds the sinner that he is alive in Christ and dead to his old way of life. Love for one's neighbor and other commands from God's holy law come as a spontaneous act of the Spirit in the life of Christians. The law will still be fulfilled in the life of the Christian through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is passive in this work of grace in his life so that God may receive all the glory and the believer might continually renew himself in the love of God seen through the Christ of the cross.

CHAPTER 3  
GOSPEL-BASED SANCTIFICATION IN CALVIN  
AND REFORMED THOUGHT

If Luther could be the father and voice of the Reformation, then Calvin might very well be called the theologian of the Reformation. Hesselink says, “Phillip Melancthon, Luther’s close friend and colleague and himself no mean theologian, reportedly dubbed Calvin ‘the theologian.’”<sup>1</sup> Calvin, and all those who are from the “Reformed” tradition,<sup>2</sup> has written a lot on union with Christ, predestination, justification, regeneration, sanctification, and several other doctrines. Though many have been critical of Luther and Lutherans on the doctrine of sanctification, no one questions whether or not Calvin spoke of the doctrine. It is clear from even a cursory reading of Calvin’s *Institutes* that Calvin cared just as much about sanctification as he did about justification. Perhaps he was even more concerned to articulate a doctrine of sanctification than justification. Calvin dealt at length with the doctrine of sanctification before he gave his definition of justification.<sup>3</sup> Some call Calvin the “theologian of

---

<sup>1</sup>John Hesselink, “Calvin’s Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 74.

<sup>2</sup>“Reformed” means all those who associate themselves with Calvin and the theology he taught. See the definition of the “Reformed Tradition” by J. I. Packer, “Reformed Tradition,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 997-1001.

<sup>3</sup>See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and indexed Ford Lewis Battles, reissued ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 552 ff. There has been considerable debate about the reason why Calvin dealt with sanctification before justification, especially since the Reformation was still fighting the errors of the Roman Catholics on justification. Most scholars believe the emphasis was polemical for Calvin, seeing as how the charges of the Roman church were against the laxity in spiritual life caused by the Reformed teaching of justification. See Richard Gaffin, Jr., “Justification and Union with Christ: *Institutes* 3.11-18,” in *A*

sanctification,”<sup>4</sup> but even Calvin did not see justification and sanctification as separate doctrines. Calvin believed union with Christ brought all theology together, especially as it concerned various aspects of salvation.

Calvin believed his *Institutes* were a guide for reading the Bible. If anything, they were more of a guide to interpretation rather than an actual systematic theology. Calvin, like Luther, wanted Christians to get at “the meat of the nut” by studying the Scriptures themselves. Calvin’s commentaries were to be read along with the *Institutes*. The *Institutes* simply served as the organized theological introduction for reading the commentaries. Both of these works were to direct readers back to the text of Scripture to see what God had to say.

The first part of this chapter gives an overview of the key tenets of Calvin’s theology as explained in his *Institutes*, including his thinking on sanctification. The second part of the chapter is devoted to several key modern evangelical and Reformed theologians who have written on sanctification and their differing views on the doctrine of sanctification. In conclusion, there is a summary of a nature of progression in sanctification that may be understood as a pursuit of personal holiness because of the Christian’s union with Christ. In Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification, union with Christ results in a love for God and mortification of sin, which is evident in the works of every true believer. This understanding of sanctification, in the tradition of Calvin, preserves the distinction between justification and sanctification. This definition also stands against legalism as it exalts the necessity of grace as a prerequisite for works in the Christian life.

---

*Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, The Calvin 500 Series, ed. David H. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 254-55. For an overview and literature on the discussion of the placement of sanctification before justification, see K. Wübbenhorst, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Justification,” in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. B. L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 117n53.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 213.

Chapter 5 evaluates the actual contributions of these positions from the Reformed tradition as a whole as it concerns a discussion on the nature of progress in sanctification.

### **Overview of Calvin's Theology**

Though there is insufficient time or space to elaborate on Calvin's theology, there is much that can be summarized concerning his overall approach to the Scriptures and the central matter of theology. In many ways it is even easier to describe Calvin's doctrine because of his clarity in writing and articulating his doctrinal beliefs in his *Institutes*. In this overview of Calvin's theology, this chapter discusses four themes found in Calvin's approach and use of theology in his structure of the *Institutes*: (1) the four articles of the Apostle's Creed, (2) the twofold knowledge of God, (3) the Trinitarian God, and (4) union with Christ.<sup>5</sup> Though all four approaches have warrant in Calvin's thinking, the last approach, union with Christ, is at the heart of Calvin's thinking. Union with Christ permeates Calvin's *Institutes* and that theme is given more space as it best explains how Calvin also represented the doctrine of sanctification in his work. As part of the end of the overview, the relevance of Calvin's overall theology is made to Calvin's understanding of holiness as a result of union with Christ.

### **The Four Articles of the Apostle's Creed**

There are a multitude of debates concerning the structuring of Calvin's *Institutes*. One of the most famous and popular is that of Benjamin Warfield:<sup>6</sup>

What Thucydides is among Greek, or Gibbon among eighteenth-century English historians, what Plato is among philosophers, or the Iliad among epics, or

---

<sup>5</sup>This arrangement of the structure is taken from Partee. See Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, vii. Much of this section of the dissertation is in debt to Partee's scholarly observations concerning Calvin's work and structure seen in the *Institutes*.

<sup>6</sup>See Benjamin Warfield, "On the Literary History of Calvin's 'Institutes,'" in *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 373-428.

Shakespeare among dramatists, that Calvin's 'Institutes' is among theological treatises.<sup>7</sup>

Warfield said that the edition of 1559 was ordered according to "the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the Holy Catholic Church."<sup>8</sup> Though there are many things that could be commended concerning this view, it is problematic for a few reasons.

Though it is obvious the Apostles' Creed influenced the four books of Calvin's *Institutes*, Calvin's unifying theme of the four books was not necessarily the Creed.

Calvin wrote,

Thus far I have followed the order of the Apostles' Creed because it sums up in a few words the main points of our redemption, and thus may serve as a tablet for us upon which we see distinctly and point by point the things in Christ that we ought to heed.<sup>9</sup>

In context, Calvin was writing concerning his immediate discussion concerning Christ and redemption, not the entirety of his *Institutes*.<sup>10</sup> Another reason Warfield's view seems insufficient for providing a unifying theme is that the "Holy Spirit" is not even the real focus in an *explicit* way in book three. Partee notes that Warfield's view "seems to assume a stronger doctrine of the person of the Holy Spirit than Calvin actually presents."<sup>11</sup> Calvin obviously affirmed the person of the Holy Spirit, but "his emphasis is on the *work* of the spirit."<sup>12</sup> The last reason to consider another formulation other than that of Warfield is that "a Trinitarian formulation of a four-book sequence requires that the doctrine of the church have a clear inner dynamic connection with the doctrine of God."<sup>13</sup> Calvin does not make such a connection in his work. A reader might make this

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 374.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 338.

<sup>9</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 527.

<sup>10</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 36.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

conclusion only if they presuppose the use of the Creed as the foundation for Calvin's four books.

### **The Twofold Knowledge of God**

Edward Dowey proposed another view for the structure of Calvin's *Institutes*. He said, "That the real division of Calvin's exposition is the twofold knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer."<sup>14</sup> Dowey writes, "From the point of view of the knowledge of God, which is the foundation of Calvin's theological writing, Calvin's *Institutes* of 1559 contains two, not four, divisions."<sup>15</sup> Dowey takes his view from a statement Calvin made in the final edition of his *Institutes*: "First, as much in the fashioning of the universe as in the general teaching of Scripture the Lord shows himself to be simply the Creator. Then in the face of Christ [cf. 2 Cor 4:6] he shows himself the Redeemer."<sup>16</sup> This twofold distinction is obviously important for Calvin and seen in his works, but if the first book of the *Institutes* deals with God's knowledge as Creator and the last three books deal with his knowledge as Redeemer, then what is motivating Calvin to deal with the works of the Spirit and the Church as separate chapters? The subjects of the books are all related to God's knowledge as Creator and Redeemer, but to say that this twofold knowledge is sufficient as a unifying theme and an organizational theory is somewhat forced.<sup>17</sup> The unity of these subjects of the four books seems to be found, ultimately, in knowledge of God through Christ. To know Christ means to know God through the mystical union of the believer with Christ.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>15</sup>Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 41. For another proponent of this view see A. Dakin, *Calvinism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946).

<sup>16</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 40.

<sup>17</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 37.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 38-39. Also see the arguments by Brian G. Armstrong, "Duplex

## The Trinitarian God

Philip Walker Butin proposed a view that focused on the Trinity as the way to structure Calvin's *Institutes*. Though there are some similarities between his view and that of Warfield, they differ in two ways. Butin said that Book IV of the *Institutes* was a theological continuation of Calvin's exposition of the Holy Spirit in Book III. Second, Butin also focused on "the intimate relation between the human and the divine, thereby calling into question the modern view of the self as separate from God."<sup>19</sup> Butin said that the Trinitarian structure of the Apostle's Creed was the "organizing paradigm for successive editions of the *Institutes*" and disagrees with those who hold to what he calls a more "dialectical interpretation" of the *Institutes*.<sup>20</sup> Still, though the Trinity is obviously important to Calvin, a "Trinitarian outline for the *Institutes* suggests three books rather than four."<sup>21</sup>

## Union with Christ

The last view, proposed by Charles Partee, is that union with Christ is the organizing theme for the structure of the *Institutes*. Partee begins his defense of Calvin's view by quoting Calvin's comments at the beginning of Book III. Calvin writes,

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human

---

Cognito Dei, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form and Purpose in Calvin's Theology," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 135.

<sup>19</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 39.

<sup>20</sup>See Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15-16, 19. Also see Partee's arguments for the problematic approach of Butin as it concerns God's grace and humanity's sin nature. Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 39.

<sup>21</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 39.

race remains useless and of no value for us. . . . Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.<sup>22</sup>

Partee observes,

This statement suggests that Calvin's previous exposition was concerned with what Christ does *for* us and the subsequent discussion will treat what Christ does *within* us. In this connection our union with Christ is powerfully affirmed. Since the incarnation, Christians are not allowed to think of themselves apart from Christ in whom, by God's grace, they live.<sup>23</sup>

Partee divides the *Institutes* into two parts: (1) God for us (with Book I dealing with God as Creator and Book II dealing with God the Redeemer) and (2) God with us (with Book III dealing with the Faithful Person(s) and Book IV dealing with the Faithful Community).<sup>24</sup> Book I deals with theology proper as the loving Creator who cares for his creatures. Book II, after dealing with the humanity's sin, affirms a Chalcedonian Christology, affirming the mystery of the incarnation. Book III covers how God the Creator and Redeemer will apply the work of redemption to sinful humanity. The redeemed sinner receives the gift of faith, "which is the principal work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>25</sup> In Book IV, Calvin then explains the redeemed community and the external means of grace as he discusses the church's ministry, sacraments, and relation to the civil government.<sup>26</sup> Partee understands Calvin to be saying that "Union in Christ is both a state and a process. This union with Christ who is one with God is the central and irreducible mystery of the Christian faith and life. God is for us in Jesus Christ, and God is with us in Jesus Christ."<sup>27</sup> Partee believes that "as divine being is known in Christ, so

---

<sup>22</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 537.

<sup>23</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 40.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 41. Also, see the arguments of Andrew Purves and Mark Achtemeier, *Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church* (Louisville Witherspoon, 1999). Also see Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 541.

is human being. We are not to think of God or ourselves apart from Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

Calvin says that if believers contemplate Christ outside themselves, which means outside of the Holy Spirit who unites believers to Christ in faith, then believers know nothing of Christ. Calvin says that Christ “unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.”<sup>29</sup> For Calvin, believers should not think of themselves apart from Christ.

Even though this concept of “union” is throughout the *Institutes* and helps to organize Calvin’s work, this concept does not mean other positions on the organization of the *Institutes* are not helpful. All the organizing principles above can be helpful when talking about Calvin’s works and certain elements of these views could certainly be utilized when studying various parts of the *Institutes*. Still, Calvin was very clear that union involved both justification and sanctification. The concept of union holds these two doctrines together in Calvin’s teachings.

### **Justification and Sanctification for Calvin**

Calvin was a man who loved to preach the gospel. He taught that the only way one could be effectually united to Christ was through the work of the Holy Spirit. This bond of the Holy Spirit granted both cleansing and justification.<sup>30</sup> Citing Scripture (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2; Rom 1:4) Calvin called the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of sanctification.”<sup>31</sup> For Calvin, both justification and sanctification were rooted in union with Christ. In chapter 11-18 or Book III, Calvin gives what has been called a treatment of justification with “few peers” and is arguably still the standard by which Reformed

---

<sup>28</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 40.

<sup>29</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 541.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 538.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

writers measure their own treatments of justification.<sup>32</sup>

Calvin's understanding of union is at the heart of his understanding of the biblical realities of both justification and sanctification. In fact, it could be said that these two realities are inseparable in the twofold benefit of union with Christ, though they can still be distinguished.<sup>33</sup> In the rest of this chapter, readers will examine how justification and sanctification, for Calvin, are both part of the twofold grace of God given by the Holy Spirit to the believer through granting faith and repentance.

In the *Institutes* 3.11, Calvin sums up his understanding of faith and benefits it brings:

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.<sup>34</sup>

Calvin admits that he had earlier not given much time to the doctrine of justification. His main reason for only "touching" on the doctrine was

because it was more to the point to understand first how little devoid of good works is the faith, through which alone we obtain free righteousness by the mercy of God; and what is the nature of the good works of the saints, with which part of this question is concerned.<sup>35</sup>

Calvin was, no doubt, concerned to show that the doctrine of *sola fide* did not mean the non-Roman Christians were going to become licentious.<sup>36</sup>

There are two very important parts to Calvin's summary. First, the saving benefits Christ brings only come through his person. Christ, himself, has to be "grasped

---

<sup>32</sup>Gaffin, "Justification and Union with Christ," 248.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 253.

<sup>34</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 725.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 726.

<sup>36</sup>See n. 3 in this chap.

and possessed.” Gaffin says, “In other words, in view here is the believer’s union with Christ, about which we hear, emphatically and repeatedly, as Calvin’s treatment of justification unfolds.”<sup>37</sup> Secondly, by union with Christ, believers’ “principally” receive “a double grace.” Calvin goes on to describe this twofold grace as that of justification and regeneration (i.e., sanctification). These three points (union, justification, and sanctification) are important for setting the stage of how Calvin will explain the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ (in justification). It seems as if this twofold grace “encompasses all other saving benefits of union with Christ.”<sup>38</sup> This twofold grace is rooted in union. This twofold grace also means, as mentioned previously, that justification and sanctification are inseparable, though still distinguishable.<sup>39</sup>

An important question comes to Calvin concerning his treatment of sanctification before justification. If justification was so important to him and had the highest priority as the “main hinge on which religion turns,”<sup>40</sup> why did Calvin deal with it *after* sanctification?<sup>41</sup> In answer to this question, Calvin says (for 133 pages) that saving faith brings with it a desire for personal holiness.<sup>42</sup> The reason Calvin can treat sanctification first is, because for him, “justification and sanctification were given to faith simultaneously and inseparably, though also variously, so that the order of their presentation was discretionary.”<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Gaffin, “Justification and Union with Christ,” 252-53.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 253.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 726.

<sup>41</sup>See the overview of K. Wübbenhorst and the literature cited “Calvin’s Doctrine of Justification,” 117n53.

<sup>42</sup>Gaffin, “Justification and Union with Christ,” 255. More is discussed concerning Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification later in this chapter.

<sup>43</sup>Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “Biblical Theology and the Westminster Standards,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 175-77.

The most important thing to remember in any discussion of justification and sanctification is the fundamental importance of the basis for both parts of this “double grace”: union with Christ.<sup>44</sup> Though it is fair to say Calvin gives “priority” to justification over sanctification in the sense that justification takes place before sanctification (which is completed at the end of life), the “stand-alone” foundation for salvation is not justification in and of itself, but rather faith in Christ (union), which also concerns the doing of good works (sanctification).<sup>45</sup> Justification is a necessity for the Christian gospel for Calvin, but not the *ultimate* “hinge” for Calvin in the same way it was for Luther. Still, defining justification, especially during the Reformation battles with Rome, was important to Calvin. Calvin says,

Therefore, “to justify” means nothing else than to acquit of guilt him who was accused, as if his innocence were confirmed. Therefore, since God justifies us by the intercession of Christ, he absolves us not by the confirmation of our own innocence but by the imputation of righteousness, so that we who are not righteous in ourselves may be reckoned as such in Christ.<sup>46</sup>

For Calvin, justification deals with the reckoning and imputing of the righteousness of Christ to the believer.<sup>47</sup> Gaffin says, “These two ideas, ‘reckoning’ and ‘imputing,’ ‘imputation,’ are close, even overlapping in their meaning. However, for Calvin they are not simply identical. In their close affinity he distinguishes them.”<sup>48</sup> Calvin is clear that believers are not righteous in themselves, but need to be reckoned righteous in Christ.<sup>49</sup> Calvin understands that the reckoning of a sinner must be grounded in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. The imputation grounds and precedes the

---

<sup>44</sup>Gaffin, “Justification and Union with Christ,” 257.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 256. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 725-26.

<sup>46</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 728.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 727-28.

<sup>48</sup>Gaffin, “Justification and Union with Christ,” 260-61.

<sup>49</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 728.

reckoning. The imputation, along with the first component of “twofold grace” (which is justification), comes with faith.<sup>50</sup>

When Calvin rejects the Roman Catholic view of sanctification in Book III of his *Institutes*, he specifically rejects their understanding of confession, satisfaction, indulgences, and purgatory.<sup>51</sup> Considering the apologetic nature of Calvin’s defense of biblical sanctification, it is appropriate to start with his rejection of the Roman Catholic understanding of sanctification as the historical setting of his articulation of what becomes a Reformed understanding of sanctification, even though the rejection of Roman theology was actually given at the end of his articulation of repentance/holiness.<sup>52</sup>

Calvin addresses the “three parts of penance” in Roman Catholic theology: (1) contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction of works.<sup>53</sup> Concerning contrition Calvin says, “And they do not grasp the measure of the debt so that they are able to discern within themselves that they have paid what they owed. . . . For when will anyone dare assure himself that he has applied all of his powers to lament his sins?”<sup>54</sup> Partee summarizes Calvin’s thoughts on the Roman view of contrition well: “Calvin thinks the bitterness of our sorrow for sin will never correspond with the magnitude of

---

<sup>50</sup>Gaffin, “Justification and Union with Christ,” 261. See Gaffin’s argument for justification as a purely forensic concept in Calvin’s thought, *Ibid.*, 261-69. In these pages, Gaffin argues that justification, along with imputation, is a purely forensic idea in Calvin. However, Gaffin also sees Calvin’s concept of union bringing in the notion of justification being a “participationist” concept as well. It is only by participating in Christ’s righteousness through union that the believer may be imputed with Christ’s righteousness. It could be said that without justification being “participationist,” it cannot be forensic in Calvin’s thought according to Gaffin.

<sup>51</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 215.

<sup>52</sup>For Calvin, “repentance” includes the doctrine of sanctification/holiness. Calvin’s plain understanding of holiness/repentance starts in Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 593. His use of “repentance” to include holiness was typical of his time and his medieval predecessors. *Ibid.*, 592n1.

<sup>53</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 622-52.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 625.

the offense and therefore can never provide the necessary assurance of pardon.”<sup>55</sup>

Calvin’s point is that no believer will ever know when to stop sorrowing over their sin because of the nature of sin. Mankind’s sin is so offensive against a holy God that there is no possible way to say “I’m sorry” and have that sorrow actual amount to anything as far as the sinner’s debt to God. Mankind is not capable of being so sorry for sin that it will actually satisfy a holy God. Even if there was an amount of sorrow that would be sufficient to show true, heartfelt contrition, how would the believer measure their own contrition so they no longer had to worry that God was still angry at their sin? The believer must find assurance in order for contrition to stop. The Roman doctrine was both unbiblical and practical in Calvin’s view. For Calvin, repentance is not the cause of forgiveness of sins. Calvin says, “We have taught that the sinner does not dwell upon his own compunction or tears, but fixes both eyes upon the Lord’s mercy alone.”<sup>56</sup> The believer will find comfort in the mercy of God, not in how sorrowful he is.

Concerning confession, the second part of the Roman teaching on penance, Calvin denounces the Roman teaching and usage of such passages as those dealing with Jesus cleansing the lepers and sending them to the priests to pronounce them truly clean as the law of Moses commanded (Matt 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; 17:14).<sup>57</sup> Calvin argues that the allegorical understanding of Jesus healing the lepers, the wrong teaching of Rome that sin is spiritual leprosy, is inadequate for how the whole Bible presents the priesthood. Calvin says, “All the priestly offices have been transferred to Christ and are fulfilled and completed in him. . . . The whole right and honor of the priesthood has therefore been transferred to him.”<sup>58</sup> Calvin rejects the idea that only the Roman priests

---

<sup>55</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 215.

<sup>56</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 626.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 626-27.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 627. Calvin bases his conclusions on the arguments from Hebrews, especially Heb 7:12.

could receive confession. Instead, he argues that private confession to God and to one another. Calvin says, “Let us take the apostle’s view, which is simple and open: namely, that we should lay our infirmities on one another’s breasts, to receive among ourselves mutual counsel, mutual compassion, and mutual consolation.”<sup>59</sup> Calvin believed in both public and private confession before God and men. At the same time, no one was to insist on confession, but rather the sinner should freely confess sin whenever they need to do so.<sup>60</sup> Calvin also says it is impossible and unbiblical to expect sinners to recount every one of their sins in confession. He quotes David in Psalm 19:12 and says that no one is able to remember all of their sins because sinners have “secret sins” because their hearts are so sinful. Calvin understands the nature of sin and, like his problem with the Roman teaching on contrition, realizes no believer, no matter how sincere, will remember every sin and be able to confess them all.<sup>61</sup> Again, the confessor’s only hope lies in the grace of God in Christ.

The third part of the Roman doctrine of penance, satisfaction, means “that in order to merit God’s pardon a person must make compensation for his or her transgressions.”<sup>62</sup> Calvin explains how Rome’s teaching on satisfaction basically means that “the blood of Christ is of no avail, except in so far as it is dispensed through the keys of the church.”<sup>63</sup> Calvin summarizes Rome’s teaching: “From this it follows that we shall share in the expiation made by Christ only if that honor rest with him which those who try to appease God by their own recompense seize for themselves.”<sup>64</sup> In other

---

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 630.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 635-38.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 641. See Partee’s helpful summary of Calvin’s thoughts on confession in Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 215.

<sup>62</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 215.

<sup>63</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 652.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 653.

words, it is a cooperative effort with God for sinful mankind to receive forgiveness. God is appeased only by the efforts of man striving for repentance. Calvin says no assurance may be obtained by anyone who believes as Rome teaches. There is no peace with God because the sinner can never be sure of his pardon with God. The pardon is based on the efforts of the sinner, not the works of God's mercy alone. Calvin, contrary to Rome, points the redeemed to the cross of Christ for comfort. He quotes Colossians 1:14, 20 and says believers already have redemption through the blood of Christ.<sup>65</sup> Calvin says Christ is a "perpetual advocate" who gives an "everlasting propitiation by which sins may be expiated."<sup>66</sup> For Calvin, only the reception of Christ is needed for true repentance of sins, not the works of sinners attempting to placate God's wrath through penance, no matter how sincere.<sup>67</sup> It is not through the believer's sincere works of contrition, confession, or satisfaction that a believer has assurance of God's forgiveness, but only through the work of Christ on the cross that a believer may take refuge from the condemnation of sin.<sup>68</sup> Christ alone must get the honor for this work of redemption.

Both indulgences and purgatory come from the Roman theologians' understanding of satisfaction. For Calvin, indulgences are "subterfuge" and are for the express purpose of making "salvation the object of lucrative trafficking, the prince of salvation reckoned at a few coins, nothing offered free of charge."<sup>69</sup> Calvin finds the whole practice of selling indulgences so foolish and obviously corrupt that he almost seems to think he should not even waste time arguing against them. He does, however, spend several pages arguing against indulgences using Scripture and other authorities that

---

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 654.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 652.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 652-53.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 670.

speak against them.<sup>70</sup> At the heart of his argument is the intention of God with the gospel. Calvin argues that “Paul testifies that Christ is offered to us through the gospel, with every abundance of heavenly benefits, with all his merits, all his righteousness, wisdom, and grace, without exception.”<sup>71</sup> God has given the gospel freely, so satisfaction for sin must be in Christ alone and free of charge. The pope has not merit to give, especially that he is within his biblical rights to ask a fee.

Calvin’s last argument against Roman theology as it concerns sanctification is that of the issue of purgatory. In a similar line of argument that he levels against indulgences, Calvin uses Scripture to say that the doctrine of purgatory is both unbiblical and unnecessary if Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient to save. He calls purgatory a “dreadful blasphemy against Christ” and says that it is “forged by Satan’s craft.”<sup>72</sup> As Partee summarizes concerning Calvin’s thoughts, it seems that “purgatory is a place where expiation of sins is sought apart from the blood of Christ.”<sup>73</sup> Again, anything that takes away from the sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross is anathema for Calvin.

How does Calvin describe his doctrine of sanctification? How is it similar, and yet distinct from his doctrine of justification? As mentioned previously, union is what brings the two doctrines together. Calvin says, “For when this topic is rightly understood it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone, and simple pardon; nevertheless actual holiness of life, so to speak, is not separated from free imputation of righteousness.”<sup>74</sup> For Calvin, faith brings justification to believers and then repentance

---

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 671-75.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 675.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 216.

<sup>74</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 593.

comes as the fruit of faith. Repentance is connected to regeneration and sanctification.<sup>75</sup> Calvin says that “though they cannot be separated, they ought to be distinguished.”<sup>76</sup> He goes on to explain the connection between faith and repentance: “As faith is not without hope, yet faith and hope are different things, so repentance and faith, although they are held together by a permanent bond, require to be joined rather than confused.”<sup>77</sup> After describing a word study of repentance and talking about the syntax of the word in Scripture, he concludes,

On this account, in my judgment, repentance can thus be well defined: it is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arise from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.<sup>78</sup>

Calvin seeks to restate his understanding of repentance: “Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam’s transgression.”<sup>79</sup>

What does this regeneration look like and when does it happen in the Christian life? For Calvin, renewal and holiness go together. He says, “We are restored by this regeneration through the benefit of Christ into the righteousness of God; from which we had fallen through Adam.”<sup>80</sup> God purifies the one he adopts into his family. Calvin says concerning the duration of this restoration,

And indeed, this restoration does not take place in a moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance

---

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 592-97.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 597.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 601.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.<sup>81</sup>

It is important to remember that Calvin wants to maintain the close connection between justification and sanctification as he continues to go in depth concerning regeneration and its connection to Christian growth. Calvin does not want to overemphasize either sanctification or justification. Partee summarizes,

Refusing to separate these fraternal, but not identical, twins is crucial for understanding Calvin. If justification is too strongly emphasized Calvin is moved in a Lutheran direction; if sanctification is too strongly emphasized Calvin is moved in a Wesleyan direction. Proper understanding also requires attention to expository order, the precise relation to justification, and especially the recognition that sanctification is the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned previously, the “righteousness of God” and the “race of repentance” are not contrary.<sup>83</sup> They both need each other. Calvin views this “race” as a pursuit of full freedom from the bondage of sin. Calvin says that even though “the children of God [are] freed through regeneration from bondage to sin,” they still “do not obtain full possession of freedom so as to feel no more annoyance from their flesh.”<sup>84</sup> Calvin wrestles with what to call the remnant of evil that continues to dwell in believers. He disagrees with Augustine on what he considers to be Augustine’s lack of boldness to call the remnant evil what says it is, “sin.”<sup>85</sup> Calvin says sin is “when man is tickled by any desire at all against the law of God.”<sup>86</sup> Calvin believes that, until the mortal body dies, believers will have the depravity of sin. Still, Calvin believes that, in the doctrine of

---

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 209.

<sup>83</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 602. Calvin uses many words like “growth,” “race,” “continual,” “throughout,” and other such language that suggests the process of regeneration and repentance. Though there is a starting point for the believer being born anew, the Christian’s life conforms more to the image of Christ as it increases in maturity.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 602-03.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 603.

renewal/sanctification, sin has lost its dominion over believers.<sup>87</sup> Regeneration is the reason there is now a struggle in believers.

When Calvin says the believer is delivered from the dominion of sin, he refers to “the guilt of sin, rather than to the very substance of sin.”<sup>88</sup> Sin does not reign in believers, but still continues to dwell in the believers for the purpose of humbling them “by the consciousness of their own weakness.”<sup>89</sup> Calvin says that believers are able to have victory over the remaining indwelling sin by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the one who gives power to believers to overcome the struggle that still remains. Calvin understands the Bible to teach that the “Spirit does not stir up man to dissolute and unbridled license; but, according as it distinguishes between lawful and unlawful, it teaches man to keep measure and temperance.”<sup>90</sup> The Spirit of God is connected to the knowledge of God in the Scriptures. The Spirit leads believers to a right understanding of and obedience to the Scriptures where two things are taught concerning sanctification: (1) believers will be “purged or uncleanness and defilement, into obedience to God’s righteousness” and (2) believers will have to struggle with weakness as long as they are in this earthly body and “daily fight against them.”<sup>91</sup>

The Spirit of God uses the Scriptures to help believers produce fruit that shows their union with Christ. There is no faith union (i.e., justification) without the works/fruits of repentance (i.e., sanctification) in the life of believers. Calvin summarizes his thinking on the “fruits of repentance”:<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 607.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Calvin includes in these “fruits” the following: “the duties of piety toward God, of charity toward men, and in the whole of life, holiness and purity.” See Calvin,

Briefly, the more earnestly any man measures his life by the standard of God's law, the surer are the signs of repentance he shows. Therefore, the Spirit, while he urges us to repentance, often recalls us now to the individual precepts of the law, now to the duties of the Second Table. Yet in other passages the Spirit has first condemned uncleanness in the very wellspring of the heart, and then proceeded to the external evidences that mark sincere repentance.<sup>93</sup>

Since repentance flows from faith, Calvin's doctrines of justification and sanctification teaches that "we are not united to God because of our holiness but because we are united to him we become more and more holy."<sup>94</sup> Since Calvin is developing a confessional theology, he "emphasizes what needs to be learned first rather than what must be posited first as the basis for deductions."<sup>95</sup> Calvin deals with sanctification as part of regeneration and shows the need for the human role of struggling with sin. God is still doing the work of making believers holy (as a process) through his Spirit, but, though believers are struggling against sin, it is not because they are *cooperating* with God. Rather, Calvin views the human will as *responsive* to the Holy Spirit, not an independent force of its own. Man's free will is not the cause of his sanctification.<sup>96</sup>

Some may ask if Calvin's view of sanctification has the opposite problem of Luther. Luther was accused of Antinomianism, the disregard for rules altogether. Calvin, especially considering some of the men he influenced during the Puritan era,<sup>97</sup>

---

*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 609.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 210.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 262-64.

<sup>97</sup>Several men have been accused, rightly, of an insipid Legalism. See C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (New York: Seabury, 1966). Time does not allow going in to great detail concerning the useful points of this book. In brief, Allison traces legalism in the teachings of men like Thomas Hooker and other Puritans during this era that struggled with moralism. Allison connects their moralistic tendencies to the rise of Deism in the coming centuries.

may be accused of leaving the door open for Legalism in his doctrine of sanctification.<sup>98</sup> However, Niesel claims, “If with the usual prejudices about the legalism of Calvin we come to his writings and really read them, it is just here [in Book II] that we shall find what a lot we have to unlearn.”<sup>99</sup> Calvin explains the necessity and significance of how the whole Old Covenant points to Christ and how the Ten Commandments are still a moral guide for believers.<sup>100</sup> Calvin did believe in the use of the moral law for believers, which is also known as the third use of the law. This moral law plays a major part in the sanctification of the believer, but Calvin takes pains to show that the law can only be obeyed because of the role and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. Union is what brings believers into justification and sanctification. This union is not a work of man and is not brought about by the law. In addition to Calvin’s focus on God’s work of bringing believers into union with him in sanctification, he also stresses that grace comes before law. The law, for Calvin, is not grace-less. The whole of the Old Testament is, ultimately, about Christ.<sup>101</sup> Partee says, “The law and gospel are both grace-full but in different ways.”<sup>102</sup> Calvin desires to show Christ in all of the Scripture, not only in the New Testament. In making these efforts to show that the law is gracious, Calvin, again, protects himself from charges of legalism.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup>“Legalism,” as it is used here, means the use of the law for justification and salvation in general.

<sup>99</sup>Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 92.

<sup>100</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 340-449. These sections cover all of Book II:6-10. Calvin is very careful and thorough in his explanation of the law and its relation to the gospel.

<sup>101</sup>David L. Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 6, 140-41.

<sup>102</sup>Partee, *The Theology of Calvin*, 137. Also, see the rest of Partee’s argument concerning the use of law in Calvin. Partee, *The Theology of Calvin*, 136-42.

<sup>103</sup>Unfortunately, not all of Calvin’s followers followed the same procedure and were so careful. Partee is especially critical of the *Westminster Confession* and how it

## Summary for Calvin's Thinking on Holiness

In conclusion, Calvin sees sanctification and justification as one subject because of union with Christ, but they are two separate doctrines as it concerns analysis. Barth says concerning Calvin and these doctrines, "We are not dealing with a second divine action which either takes place simultaneously with [justification], or precedes or follows it in time."<sup>104</sup> The confessional approach of Calvin shows his concern for believers to understand their need to mortify sin in their lives so that no Roman theologian could accuse the Reformers of being antinomian. The Christian life focuses on both right standing with God (seen in justification) *and* holy living because of God's work through his Spirit in the life of believers. While sanctification certainly has a progressive element as a work of God throughout the life of the believer, it still has a definitive element that must not be overlooked.<sup>105</sup> Repentance is "inseparable from faith and from God's mercy."<sup>106</sup> Calvin says,

Now if it is true—a fact abundantly clear—that the whole of the gospel is contained under these two headings, repentance and forgiveness of sins, do we not see that the Lord freely justifies his own in order that he may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of the Spirit?<sup>107</sup>

The human and divine subjects are both part of the work of sanctification. Calvin does not relieve believers of their responsibility in the work of the doctrine of sanctification.

---

explains the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. See Partee, *The Theology of Calvin*, 13ff., 137.

<sup>104</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, G. W. Bromily and T. F. Torrance, vol. 4, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, pt. 2, trans. G. W. Bromily (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 502, CD-ROM.

<sup>105</sup>See the arguments of John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," *Calvin Theological Journal* 2 (April-November 1967): 5-21. Murray makes it clear that what is most characteristic concerning the definitive element of sanctification is for believers to be dead to sin and resurrected to life because of union with Christ. See *ibid.*, 12 as well as Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 212.

<sup>106</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 615.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 613.

The human will is responsive and participatory with the divine will in growth of holy living.<sup>108</sup> Mortification of the flesh involves self-denial (negative aspect) through devotion to God (positive aspect). Believers experience a continual denial of self and sin and strive to put on Christ as they live a life of repentance and holiness.<sup>109</sup> Believers, through the power of the Holy Spirit given by God, must continue to pursue holiness by properly using the law as a standard for living. This proper use of God's law comes through the Holy Spirit living and reigning in the hearts of believers.<sup>110</sup>

How have modern evangelical Reformers<sup>111</sup> applied the theology of Calvin to a theology of holiness? Have they discussed sanctification in a way that echoes the words of Calvin? Have they fallen into the error of men like Hooker in their attempts to uphold justification by faith alone? This next section answers some of these questions by giving an overview of the positions of current Reformed theology and some of its main theologians.

---

<sup>108</sup>For more on the discussion of divine-human will in the doctrine of salvation for Calvin, see Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 211-13. He discusses Butin's treatment of Calvin's understanding of the role of the Trinity in Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response*.

<sup>109</sup>Time does not allow for an extensive treatment of Calvin's understanding of the Christian life. He summarizes his understanding of self-denial in Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 689-725. For more on how mortification of the flesh and the Christian life (including the means of grace) works, see Joel R. Beeke, "Appropriating Salvation: The Spirit, Faith and Assurance, and Repentance," 270-300; David Clyde Jones, "The Law and the Spirit of Christ," 301-319; William Edgar, "Ethics: The Christian Life and Good Works according to Calvin," 320-346). All of these articles are in *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008).

<sup>110</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 360-61.

<sup>111</sup>By "Reformers," I mean primarily Presbyterians, but several Baptists and other denominations would claim Calvin as their forefather as well. For the purposes of this paper, anyone who would claim a primarily Calvin-influenced sanctification will be considered "Reformers."

## Overview of Current Reformed Theology and Sanctification

This section gives a brief overview of the approaches to sanctification in evangelical Reformed circles. These positions do not describe every facet of what Reformed theologians are doing with the doctrine of sanctification, but these positions do broadly represent what evangelical Reformers are saying. The next few sections go into more details concerning the positions of Ferguson, Hoekema, Reymond, and Peterson, but this section gives a brief summary of the positions.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, one of the best-known confessions representing several evangelicals indebted to Calvin, describes the doctrine of sanctification in three parts in chapter 13: (1) a general definition, (2) the present irreconcilable war between flesh and Spirit, and (3) the completion of holiness.<sup>112</sup>

Chapter 13:1 says,

They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.<sup>113</sup>

This general definition of sanctification emphasizes, like Calvin, that sanctification is part of regeneration and that the change in the life of believers is “real and personal.” Christ’s death and resurrection is what brings sanctification. His Word and Spirit makes holiness dwell in believers. The “practice of true holiness” is the goal of the “quickening” that comes through the power of Spirit overcoming the power of the “whole body of sin.” The nature of sanctification is that of a fixed beginning in the work

---

<sup>112</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1186. This description of the *Westminster* definition is original to my knowledge and simply seeks to organize the confession for the purposes of this paper.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

of Christ that includes a progress (i.e., “war against flesh in believers”) of overcoming sin that, according to chapter 13:3, will be completed over time (finished at the end of their lives).<sup>114</sup>

In addition to this discussion of sanctification, chapter 19:5-6 of the confession says that the moral law is “a rule of life informing them [all people, esp. believers] of the will of God.”<sup>115</sup> This moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments and is forever binding on all people. Christ strengthened the obligation of the moral law; he did not weaken it in the New Covenant. The moral law does not justify anyone, but must be obeyed and is binding throughout the life of believers. Christ has abrogated the ceremonial and judicial part of the law for believers. Though the Spirit is obviously the power behind sanctification, the moral law is the practical outworking of sanctification in the life of believers.

Wayne Grudem describes sanctification primarily as “the application of redemption that is a *progressive* work that continues throughout our earthly lives.”<sup>116</sup> As he goes on to define sanctification further, he says it “is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.”<sup>117</sup> There are several problems with his position in comparison to Calvin and several other Reformed thinkers.<sup>118</sup> Grudem says that sanctification involves both the Christian and God *cooperating* together. Most Reformed theologians are careful to avoid this synergistic

---

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 1189.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 746.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Though the purpose of this purpose is not to critique Wayne Grudem, it is, however, supposed to describe influential Reformed theologians and their understandings of the progress of sanctification. Grudem’s understanding is not as careful as many and needs to be distinguished.

language (a work involving God and man) when discussing grace and salvation in general. Grudem, in his first stage of sanctification, also focuses primarily on the *moral* elements of sanctification and the changes within a Christian rather than take time to talk about a *definitive* aspect of salvation. Any past sense of being sanctified is dismissed and considered to be only a theology from Hebrews, not Paul.<sup>119</sup> Even though Grudem is very much influenced by Reformed theology, his doctrine of sanctification leaves something to be desired as it concerns Calvin's influence due to his lack of a theology of union and his language of cooperation.<sup>120</sup>

In giving an overview of these positions, it is apparent that there are some differences in how one speaks of the progress of sanctification in Reformed theology. The views of sanctification are similar in some ways, but very different in others. The rest of this chapter focuses on what is being called a view of "progressive, personal holiness based on union with Christ." After dealing with the more progressive-focused views, the paper examines a more definitive/positional view of personal holiness based on union with Christ.

### **Current Progressive-Based Views of Sanctification**

Calvin and his understanding of Calvin influence Sinclair Ferguson, Anthony Hoekema, and Robert Reymond. All three men have taught seminary at various Presbyterian/Reformed institutions and would all be committed to following a progressive-focused understanding of sanctification. Just because they are more "progressive-focused" in their understanding of sanctification does not mean they care

---

<sup>119</sup>Many Reformed theologians, including John Murray, Sinclair Ferguson, and Robert Reymond, go to great lengths to speak of the definitive nature of sanctification (see positions listed later in the chapter). Grudem makes a few passing comments in footnotes, but gives little room to discussing union with Christ or a definite aspect of sanctification. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 748 n.3.

<sup>120</sup>Grudem does defend his usage of language over against theologians like Murray. *Ibid.*, 753 n.11.

nothing about the definitive standing that the believer has in Christ. To the contrary, all three men take time to discuss both aspects of sanctification. Still, the overall emphasis in definition and description of their views focuses on the Christian becoming more and more holy as believers use the appropriate means God has given them. All three views hold to a strong view of God's sovereignty and state the importance of union with Christ as foundational for how sanctification comes about.

### **Robert Reymond and Sanctification**

When Reymond addresses the doctrine of sanctification, he begins his treatment by addressing its structural position within the skeletal frame of the *ordo salutis*.<sup>121</sup> Within this structure, Reymond says, “While sanctification is generally thought of only as a *progressive* work following upon justification and adoption, the New Testament often represents it as a “once for all” *definitive* act as well.”<sup>122</sup> In the *ordo*, Reymond places definitive sanctification right after justification and right before adoption. Progressive sanctification takes place right after adoption and at the same time as perseverance of the saints as part of what Reymond calls a “Divine-Human Activity.”<sup>123</sup>

Reymond, in discussing the Christian's union with Christ, borrows heavily from Murray once again. Reymond says that union is “an all-embracing relationship in its soteric references, which God takes up into and includes within all that he has done, is doing, and will do in behalf of the sinner.”<sup>124</sup> As he summarizes the doctrine, Reymond

---

<sup>121</sup>Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 703-11.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, 710. Reymond is also heavily dependent upon John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 87, 100-03.

<sup>123</sup>Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 711.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 736. Also see Murray, *Redemption*, 162.

says, “Union with Christ is the fountainhead from which flows the Christian’s every spiritual blessing—repentance and faith, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.”<sup>125</sup> As it concerns the Christian’s holiness and union, Reymond says, “The holiness of the Christian’s daily walk directly depends upon his union with the Savior.”<sup>126</sup> Union is for Reymond, like it is for Calvin, the glue that holds all of salvation together. It is because of Christ and him alone that all the elements of salvation can be applied to a Christian. If union is the ground of sanctification, how then does Reymond describe the doctrine and progress of sanctification?

Reymond admits that sanctification is “generally thought of as a process, and there is certainly a sense in which it is.”<sup>127</sup> At the same time, he says, “The New Testament often represents the Christian as one who *has been sanctified*, and therefore as one who has been definitively constituted in some way and on some basis *holy*.”<sup>128</sup> Reymond lists several Scriptures that defend a more definitive position of sanctification.<sup>129</sup> Reymond, strongly influenced by Murray, certainly holds to an understanding of sanctification that is grounded in the Christian’s “real spiritual union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection” which actually happens when the Christian “becomes a partaker of Christ through faith.”<sup>130</sup> Definitive sanctification is not only *positional* holiness, but a “real *existential* breach with the reign and mastery of sin, which breach is created by the Christian’s actual spiritual union with Christ in death and resurrection, and

---

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 739.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 756.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid. The texts are Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; and Eph 5:26. He gives the Greek of the following verses: Rom 6:2, 6; 6:18; 7:4-6; 1 Pet 2:24; and 4:1-2.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 757.

which is as decisive and definite as are Christ's death and resurrection."<sup>131</sup> Sin is no longer the lord of the Christian and this change of lordship occurs at the beginning of salvation. The Christian is a new man and this change occurs at the beginning of salvation when the Holy Spirit comes and makes the Christian's body his temple.<sup>132</sup> Reymond wants to avoid any doctrine of immediate perfection in his understanding of definitive sanctification: "definitive sanctification does not mean that the Christian actually achieves, personally and existentially, sinful perfection the moment he trusts Christ; this would leave no room for progressive sanctification."<sup>133</sup> Reymond says that entire sanctification is part of what awaits at the second coming of Christ. Christians still have real sin in their lives. At the same time, because of union with Christ, every Christian is a "saint" and is no longer a slave to sin as he once was. The Christian is now a servant of Christ. Definitive sanctification, found in union with Christ, is the promise of God that sin will not conquer him. It is also the promise that a Christian will have a new beginning and will change. He will not continue acting as though he were still bound to sin.<sup>134</sup> Practicing the new life in Christ is what Reymond calls progressive sanctification.

Reymond calls progressive sanctification a "Divine-Human Activity."<sup>135</sup> He quotes the article on sanctification from the *Westminster Confession* (see previous). After quoting numerous texts,<sup>136</sup> Reymond discusses the nature of the sanctified life. He says that the process has to be understood "*negatively* in terms of putting to death the

---

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 757-58.

<sup>132</sup>John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification," in *Collected Writings*, vol. 2, *The Claims of Truth* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976), 279-80.

<sup>133</sup>Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 758.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 767.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid. The texts are Exod 19:6; Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; John 17:17; 1 Thess 4:3, 7; 5:23; 1 Pet 1:15-16; Heb 12:14; 2 Cor 7:1.

deeds of the flesh which still remain in him and *positively* in terms of growth in all saving graces.”<sup>137</sup> Reymond shows how Paul’s theology teaches that the believer needs to “conform his *processive* experience with sin to his *definitive* death to sin.”<sup>138</sup> Reymond says there is a “Threefold Pattern of the Sanctified Life.”<sup>139</sup> The first pattern is that the Scriptures call the Christian to “emulate *the ethical holiness of God himself*.”<sup>140</sup>

The second pattern, and the pattern that Reymond expounds on the most, is that “Christians’ lives are to be patterned concretely in terms of conformity to *his perceptive will* for them—the moral law or Ten Commandments.”<sup>141</sup> Reymond realizes that speaking of laws and ethics can be considered legalism for many Christians. He says that legalism is when someone seeks to adhere to the law for their justification, trying to be justified by works instead of grace. The moral teachings of the law are to be the standards by which a Christian lives. These teachings are the ethical norm for Christians. Reymond goes on to say that this moral law of God, which Christians must obey, is revealed as especially the Decalogue (for Paul), but it is not exclusively the Ten Commandments.<sup>142</sup> Reymond says that “love finds its parameters in the law of God” and that love is necessary to make the law something other than a “dead letter” for Christians. The law and love must work together. Using numerous biblical passages, Reymond concludes that “the law’s ethic

---

<sup>137</sup>Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 768-69. Reymond borrows his understanding of the positive and negative aspects of progressive understanding from Berkhof. See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), 533.

<sup>138</sup>Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 769.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, 770.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.* Reymond spends eight pages discussing and defending the second pattern (770-77), while giving scant attention to the first and third patterns (less than a page each).

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*, 772.

and the gospel ethic are essentially one and the same” for Paul.<sup>143</sup>

The third pattern is Christ himself. Reymond says that this third pattern should come as no surprise because Christ was “born under the law,” which means he perfectly fulfilled all its precepts. Christ is the example for the believer. Since Christ is the image of the Father, Christians are to follow the image of Christ. Christians will perfectly conform to Christ’s image in the glorified state in heaven.<sup>144</sup>

Christians can only live a holy life because of the power of Holy Spirit. Christians are empowered by the Spirit, but they are not to be passive in their spiritual growth. Reymond quotes Murray at length as he describes what this “working out our sanctification” looks like. Murray comments,

God’s working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours so that conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works in us and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us, not the willing to the exclusion of the doing and not the doing to the exclusion of the willing, but both the willing and the doing.<sup>145</sup>

In conclusion, Reymond understands the nature of progress in sanctification to be one of a growth in holiness, based on union with Christ. The ethic of law and gospel are the same when it comes to keeping moral law. “Progress” is defined as a growth in actual holiness in the life of the Christian. If there is not a consistent growth of holiness in the life of the Christian, they should examine themselves to see if they are really believers.

### **Anthony Hoekema and Sanctification**

Hoekema defines sanctification in a very similar way to Reymond:

We may define sanctification as that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which He delivers us as justified sinners from the

---

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 774.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 778.

<sup>145</sup>Murray, *Redemption*, 148-49.

pollution of sin, renews our entire nature according to the image of god, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to Him.<sup>146</sup>

As Hoekema goes on to explain sanctification, he says that, while justification deals with the *guilt* of sin, sanctification deals with the *pollution*. Justification is said to be a declarative act while sanctification deals with the corruption of the believer's actual nature.<sup>147</sup> Sanctification is a doctrine of renewal and enables the Christian to live a life pleasing to God. Christians are saved to do good works, but Hoekema prefers to use the language of "living lives that are pleasing to God."<sup>148</sup>

Hoekema spends a few pages dealing with the biblical concept of holiness. As he describes sanctification, he says that a big part of sanctification is union with Christ. He says believers are sanctified by God's truth, God's word. The believer grows in sanctification by growing in God's word. Hoekema also discusses the important role of faith in sanctification, which is a different nuance from many Reformed writers who strictly follow Calvin.<sup>149</sup> Hoekema says that, because union is the basis for sanctification, faith is what must be a means of sanctification by the believer continuing "to grasp our union with Christ."<sup>150</sup> It is also by faith that the believer accepts the fact that in Christ sin no longer has dominion and that the Holy Spirit enables the believer to overcome sin. Last, faith, by its nature, produces fruit. Faith produces work.<sup>151</sup> Hoekema insists that both justification and sanctification are by faith.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 61.

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>149</sup>As mentioned previously, Calvin designated sanctification to be a part of union, but to flow from repentance and regeneration.

<sup>150</sup>Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," 65.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.

After giving a definition and describing sanctification as a concept biblically, Hoekema organizes his understanding of holiness into five different sections: (1) The Pattern of Sanctification, (2) God and His People in Sanctification, (3) Definitive and Progressive Sanctification, (4) Sanctification and Law, and (5) The Goal of Sanctification.<sup>153</sup>

Hoekema's pattern of sanctification is "likeness to God."<sup>154</sup> The believer must become more like God, which means the believer must be more like Christ. Hoekema says that the Scriptures teach that God himself makes believers more like himself by making them more like Christ.<sup>155</sup> There is a second part to this pattern. The second part is that believers themselves have a responsibility to "seek to become more like Christ by following His example."<sup>156</sup> For Hoekema, this seeking means there is "not just an indicative; it is also an imperative" when a believer is said to be "in Christ."<sup>157</sup> This understanding of "imperative" leads to Hoekema's discussion on God and his people.

In a similar fashion as Reymond when he discusses the "Divine-Human" relationship, Hoekema says that God is the author of sanctification. He elaborates that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in this work of making the believer holy: "It is most important for us to realize that sanctification is not something we do by ourselves, with our own efforts and in our own strength. . . . Sanctification is not a human activity but a divine gift."<sup>158</sup> Hoekema also wants to focus on sanctification as a process: "The

---

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 66-90. Hoekema includes two other sections in his article dealing with questions on the "old/new self" and perfectionism, but, for the goal of this chapter, only his sections mentioned are significant.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid. He bases this conclusion on Rom 8:29.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 70.

Bible, however, also describes sanctification as a process that involves our responsible participation.”<sup>159</sup> When Hoekema summarizes his view of how God and man work in sanctification, he says, “We may say that sanctification is a supernatural work of God in which the believer is active.”<sup>160</sup> Hoekema does not stop there: “The more active we are in sanctification, the more sure we may be that the energizing power that enables us to be active is God’s power.”<sup>161</sup>

Hoekema wants to be sure to describe sanctification as a definitive act. He, like Reymond, takes from Murray’s arguments and says that definitive sanctification is a doctrine similar to justification in that it “occurs at a point in time rather than along a timeline.”<sup>162</sup> Hoekema says that Romans 6 most clearly describes what can be called *definitive sanctification*. Believers are both dead and resurrected in the death and resurrection of Christ. This definitive sanctification goes along with justification. It is not a “second blessing” that comes after a believer has done something extra to gain it. Both doctrines are aspects of union with Christ.<sup>163</sup> Hoekema, like Reymond, speaks of the progressive nature of sanctification by emphasizing its negative and positive aspects. Negatively, the believer must put sinful practices to death. Positively, the believer must grow in the new self. Believers are not only dead to sin, but need to keep killing sinful actions to which they still may be inclined. The Spirit gives the believer strength to keeping killing sinful actions.<sup>164</sup> To summarize his understanding of the roles of God and man in both definitive and progressive sanctification, Hoekema says, “While

---

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 75-76.

sanctification in its totality is the work of God from beginning to end, particularly in its progressive phase the active participation of the believer is required.”<sup>165</sup>

The next subject Hoekema describes is that of sanctification and its relation to the law. He says there are two aspects to look at the law and the believer. On one hand, the believer is free from the law as a means of finding justification. On the other hand, the believer is not free from the law, but rather should strive to keep it as an expression of their gratitude to God for giving the gift of salvation.<sup>166</sup> Hoekema insists that according to Scripture, “Spirit-led believers are precisely the ones doing their best to keep God’s law.”<sup>167</sup> The way believers fulfill the law is by doing it. The law he describes is the “moral law” as Reymond defined it previously. In his conclusion concerning the role of law in the believer’s life, Hoekema says,

The Christian life must be a law-formed life. Though believers must not try to keep God’s law as a means of earning their salvation, they are nevertheless enjoined to do their best to keep this law as a means of showing their thankfulness to God for the salvation they have received as a gift of grace. For believers, law-keeping is an expression of Christian love and the way to Christian freedom; it is equivalent to walking by the Spirit. Since the law mirrors God, living in obedience to God’s law is living as image-bearers of God. The law, therefore, is one of the most important means whereby God sanctifies us.<sup>168</sup>

In the last part of Hoekema’s perspective article, he describes the two-fold goal of sanctification. The first part of the goal is to glorify God. God is the one who makes sinners holy. The second goal of sanctification is the benefits of God completing his work of making the believer holy. The believer becomes perfectly conformed to the image of God in his very nature. All sin is eradicated from the very existence of the believer. The believer will enjoy a sinless relationship with Christ. As Christ becomes

---

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>168</sup>Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” 88.

glorified when he returns and brings the new heavens and new earth, so the believer enjoys his union with Christ in his own personal glorification.<sup>169</sup>

In conclusion, Hoekema understands the nature of progress in sanctification to be one of a growth in holiness, based on union with Christ (much like Reymond). The Christian is very active in his own sanctification, but God himself is the power behind the actual working of the believer in sanctification. The believer should be encouraged as they are pursuing holiness that God is working their holiness in them. “Progress” is defined as a growth in actual holiness in the life of the Christian through exercising faith in God and his word. Christians are free from the law as it concerns justification, but to overcome the pollution of sin, the believer must do his best to keep God’s moral law as a sign of thankfulness to God for his gift of salvation.

### **Sinclair Ferguson and Sanctification**

Ferguson starts by saying whom he is indebted to as a theologian when he gives his understanding of the Reformed View of Sanctification. He mentions Calvin, the Puritans (esp. John Owen), great preachers (like Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones), theologians (like Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield), and twentieth-century Christian leaders (like J. Gresham Machen and Francis Schaeffer).<sup>170</sup> He is very aware of the influence of Reformed theology through the years and in current theological discussions. Above all, he credits Calvin and the New Testament for his understanding of sanctification, especially as it concerns union with Christ.<sup>171</sup>

Ferguson’s discussion of sanctification is organized into basically three

---

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>170</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 47.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 48-49.

sections: (1) Union with Christ, (2) Spiritual Warfare, and (3) Means of Grace.<sup>172</sup> Like Reymond, Hoekema, and Calvin, Ferguson says union has “profound significance” to his understanding of sanctification. Ferguson actually spends most of his article on discussing the importance of union with Christ and shows how that focus, more than any other, is to be the proper focus for understanding the doctrine of sanctification.<sup>173</sup>

Ferguson says that “Christ *is* our sanctification.”<sup>174</sup> Ferguson makes it clear that Christ has “not only died for us to remove the penalty of our sin by taking it himself; he has lived, died, risen again and been exalted in order to sanctify our human nature in himself for our sake.”<sup>175</sup> Both justification and sanctification are “earthly” doctrines that are not simply by divine *fiat*. God has done something in the real world in Christ. Neither the doctrines of justification or sanctification are legal fictions. Believers have come to share in fellowship (union) with Christ. As a result, they are able to share in his resources.<sup>176</sup> The connection is real and powerful. Ferguson agrees with Calvin’s teachings on union and says that the whole of the Christian life and experience is found in union with Christ.<sup>177</sup>

Ferguson grounds his understanding of union with Christ and the doctrine of sanctification in Romans 6. His focus is similar to that of Hoekema. Ferguson organizes Paul’s argument into six points: (1) the believer receives forgiveness of sins through

---

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 49-60, 60-67, and 67-74.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 52. Ferguson devotes eleven pages to his article on sanctification. He spends more time discussing union than he does anything else. Though Hoekema and Reymond obviously believe in Calvin’s understanding of union to some degree, it could be argued that Ferguson is the most thorough in describing it and how it relates to sanctification.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 51.

Christ, (2) this reception involves being united to Christ, (3) Christ, to whom the believer is united, died to sin, (4) since believers are united to Christ, they have also died to sin, (5) if believers have died to sin, they cannot continue to live in it, and (6) believers cannot continue to sin that grace may increase.<sup>178</sup> Justification and sanctification may not be separated any more than Christ can be separated. Union and sanctification involve the Christian considering himself both dead to sin and freed from sin. Ferguson says that “defeat in the Christian life is therefore attributed to failure to enter into a new stage of experience altogether in which sin is no longer a serious challenge to the Christian.”<sup>179</sup> Ferguson writes that death to sin is not something the believer does, but realizing that the death has taken place. Being “dead to sin” means Paul understands that the believer is free from sin’s power. As mentioned above in Hoekema, this freedom involves no longer being under the lordship of sin.<sup>180</sup> The comfort of this doctrine is not found in the believer’s ceasing to sin, because the believer will always wrestle with sin. The comfort for the believer is found in the fact that he is a new creation.<sup>181</sup> Ferguson says, in summary, “Sanctification is therefore the consistent practical outworking of what it means to belong to the new creation in Christ.”<sup>182</sup>

Ferguson sees union as the groundwork of sanctification, but understands the progress of this doctrine as that of struggle, tension, and warfare. No one can be possessed by God without realizing there is a major conflict between the believer and the world, Satan, and the flesh. The flesh is the sinful nature that is still a part of the Christian. The

---

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 60.

Christian must mortify this flesh.<sup>183</sup> Ferguson says that “grace demands mortification.”<sup>184</sup> He goes on to say that without this mortification there is no holiness in the life of the Christian.<sup>185</sup> Mortification involves killing the flesh and its lusts on a regular basis. It is not some mysticism, but involves the whole body of the believer. The final goal of sanctification is the renewal of God’s image in the believer. Christians need to imitate Christ as the true image of God and realize that to be like Christ is to be truly human. The believer needs to see himself as both defiled in his own sin and new in Christ.<sup>186</sup>

How does sanctification take place? What are the means of sanctification? Ferguson believes the Christian must make use of means in sanctification and that the continual use of those means are the believer’s participation in the process of sanctification. The indicative of sanctification is found in union with Christ and the fact that God has made the believer holy already in him. The imperative of sanctification is that now the believer must work as a result of this union with the holy Christ.<sup>187</sup> The means God has given believers to use for their sanctification are four: (1) the Word, (2) Providences, (3) Fellowship of the Church, and (4) the Sacraments. Ferguson’s treatment of these different means of sanctification is not so entirely different from the other theologians mentioned previously. He says the third use of the law is a distinctive feature of Reformed theology. He says, as Hoekema and Reymond, that the moral law is to be the guide for the Christian life.<sup>188</sup> At the same time, he stresses that all the teachings of the Scriptures need to be taught. Ferguson recalls how both Luther and Calvin preached on book after book of the

---

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>187</sup>Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” 67.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 69.

Scriptures in their own ministries. “Evangelistic” passages were not the only texts used by Calvin, but all of the Scriptures were seen as profitable for the Christian life.<sup>189</sup> Sanctification involves the renewal of the mind, which leads to a change in all of life.<sup>190</sup> God also uses various sufferings in life and the encouragement of fellow-believers to encourage each individual believer. To trust God’s providence means believing that all things work together for good for those who believe (Rom 8:28).<sup>191</sup> Believers also learn from others who are growing in their faith and from hearing the preaching of the Word in the fellowship of their local churches. Pastoral care and others who are suffering the hardships of life are also found in a local congregation.<sup>192</sup> In the church, the sacraments are celebrated. For Ferguson, these sacraments are significant in that they point believers away from themselves and point to what Christ has done for them. They are a reminder of what Christ has done for every believer. Both union and communion are celebrated afresh.<sup>193</sup> The practice of the Lord’s Supper reminds believers that they become like the one with whom they have the closest fellowship. The closest fellowship they should have is what they have with Christ.<sup>194</sup>

In conclusion, Ferguson understands the nature of progress in sanctification to be one of the outworking of union with Christ. Though there is a definite understanding of progress in his understanding of sanctification that is similar to that of Hoekema and Reymond, there are some notable differences. Ferguson agrees that mortification must take place in the Christian life. True holiness cannot grow in the life of the Christian

---

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 74.

without it. Mortification is working out union with Christ. Ferguson would agree that the proper use of the moral law is necessary for the Christian to live a holy life. Christians are involved in the process of sanctification as they pursue holy living by living the moral law.

Instead of describing this aspect of sanctification as “progression” in the sense of becoming more holy, it seems that Ferguson prefers of saying that the Christian needs to remember who they are as the indicative standing with Christ gives way to the imperative of God to be holy. Ferguson uses more of the “indicative” and “imperative” language in contrast to the definitive and progressive language of Hoekema and Reymond. It can be argued that this language difference is mere semantics, but it could be argued that Ferguson’s focus on union language drives his description of sanctification to a greater degree than that of Hoekema or Reymond. For Ferguson, for the believer to be holy means for the believer to be like Christ. The nature of progress in Ferguson’s sanctification could well be called a progression that flows from possession that centers on union with Christ.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how Calvin, as well as Reymond, Hoekema, and Ferguson, hold to a view of sanctification that focuses on union and progression. All four of these theologians see union as the overarching theme of the Scriptures and celebrate the promise that God will complete the work he begins through union with his Son, Jesus Christ. The law does not bring justification, but it is necessary as the ruling norm for Christians. Good works come from God’s justifying work in Christ through union. Sanctification is much more clearly distinguished from justification as its own doctrine, though most of the theologians mentioned want to emphasize that all the aspects of salvation can only come from union with Christ. There is no room for legalism in Calvin’s thinking because justification is what must be preserved for Reformed theology. Justification and sanctification come through union with Christ. This union means sanctification, even though in its progressive sense involves the keeping of the law, can

only be accomplished as a progress because of God's work by the Spirit. The moral law will be a pursuit for the believer throughout their entire life. The moral law is an aid to believers to show them the way they should live and love for Christ's glory. The believer is active in this work of grace in his life, but God is still working in the believer to will and to do his good pleasure. The Christian will be fully renewed to the image of God in Christ at his glorification and completed sanctification in heaven.

CHAPTER 4  
BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATION  
OF HOLINESS

How does the Bible speak of the doctrine of sanctification? Specifically, what does the Bible say about the nature of progress in the doctrine of sanctification? This chapter focuses on a New Testament understanding of holiness as explained in several important passages in Paul, the letter to the Hebrews, 1 Peter, and the gospel of John.<sup>1</sup> This chapter shows how the New Testament biblical texts set the framework for thinking about sanctification as a gospel-centered doctrine, especially as it relates to the notions of the nature of progress in Reformed theology.<sup>2</sup> The chapter has four sections to cover the New Testament understanding of holiness: approaching the text,<sup>3</sup> how Paul understands sanctification,<sup>4</sup> how the author to the Hebrews' understands sanctification,<sup>5</sup> and examples

---

<sup>1</sup>Many other passages could have been used, but these passages suffice for showing examples of how the New Testament discusses the nature of progress in a doctrine of sanctification. Other passages are referenced in the footnotes so that the reader may investigate the matter further. These passages come up the most in a study of sanctification among the theologians being compared in studies from the Lutheran and Reformed positions.

<sup>2</sup>The meaning of "Reformed" here includes both Lutheran and Reformed/Presbyterian concepts of sanctification as discussed in chaps. 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup>This section establishes and explains the foundations for a unified theology of sanctification according to the New Testament. Theology has multiple assumptions about how and why to read biblical texts and construct theology. This section explains the hermeneutical assumptions behind a concept of *gospel-based* sanctification.

<sup>4</sup>Specifically, the section explains Rom 6, 1 Cor 1:2, 30, 6:11, and Eph 5:26.

<sup>5</sup>Specifically, the section explains Heb 10:10-14, 12:10-14.

of how other New Testament authors understand the nature of progress in a doctrine of sanctification.<sup>6</sup>

The first section of this chapter explains how evangelical, gospel-centered exegesis is the foundation of a doctrine of sanctification. The second section of this chapter focuses on how Paul understands the nature of progress in a believer's holiness. The explanation focuses on the most relevant passage to the doctrine of sanctification in the Pauline corpus: Romans 6. This section of the chapter shows how the biblical texts of Romans 6 set the framework for thinking about a theology of sanctification as a gospel-centered doctrine that focuses on the work of Christ as it relates to Christian holiness. Romans 6:1-14 answers Paul's rhetorical question: "Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound?" (Rom 6:1). This section focuses on Paul's foundation for Christian sanctification. Part 2 of this section of the chapter discusses Romans 6:15-23, which is Paul's polemic against those who equate not being "under law" to being enslaved to sin. This section focuses on what real holiness is for believers and how it is demonstrated in their lives. This section also explains how other Pauline texts (1 Cor 1:2, 30, 6:11; Eph 5:26) further elaborate on the conclusions Paul makes from Romans 6.

The second section of this chapter explains how the book of Hebrews describes holiness in the life of Christians. The book of Hebrews emphasizes the cultic (Heb 10) and ethical (Heb 12) elements of sanctification. Both elements are interwoven according to these passages and this section shows how Paul and the letter to the Hebrews both espouse a view of holiness that focuses on pursuit of Christ and growth in the fruit of righteousness.

The third section of this chapter gives examples of how other New Testament authors explain holiness in the Christian life as it relates to the nature of progression. These

---

<sup>6</sup>Specifically, the section explains 1 Pet 1:15-16 and John 17:17-19.

passages<sup>7</sup> explain sanctification in terms of something that happens because of a continual return to the powerful work of Christ on the cross and the Word of Christ that believers hear. This Word works in the hearts of believers to grow them in their dependency on the work of Christ and brings about conduct that displays the holiness of God.

The end of this section very briefly discusses implications for formulating a theology of the nature of progress in sanctification (which is more fully articulated in chapter 5). Ethical progress comes as a result of the work of God's Word as it applies the work of Christ in the lives of believers. Union with Christ (Rom 6; 1 Cor 1; 6; John 17:19) brings holiness to believers. Believers have been made holy because of Christ's sacrifice (Heb 10) and will continue to pursue holiness in Christ that will lead to righteous conduct (Heb 12). Believers are holy through the Word of Christ (John 17:17; Eph 5:26) and should conduct themselves in such a way that shows the holiness of God, which is the source for their ethical outworking of holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16).

### **Approaching the Text: Tools and Methods of Interpretation**

Before looking at the biblical texts, it is important to mention how to approach the texts. Peterson says,

In the first place, inadequate attention has been paid to the use of holiness terminology in the New Testament and to passages which deal specifically with the subject of sanctification. . . . Writers have often been preoccupied with establishing the place of sanctification within the framework of a given theological system rather than letting the biblical evidence speak for itself.<sup>8</sup>

Though it is true that many have approached the text with a bias, it is arguable that no one can approach the text *without* some type of bias. For most theologians, and especially the ones mentioned in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation, their influence would be their

---

<sup>7</sup>John 17:17-19; 1 Pet 1:15-16.

<sup>8</sup>David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 16.

denominational affiliation and theological forefathers (i.e., Luther and Calvin). Still, both sets of theologians agree that Scripture is the final arbiter in matters of faith and practice. The best bias, for both groups, is the Bible bias.<sup>9</sup>

Theologians of both Reformed and Lutheran influences must commit themselves to the Bible, even if it disagrees with their presuppositions. If there is ever to be any real conversation and dialogue between differing evangelical viewpoints, this Bible bias must be at the center of all evangelical biblical interpretation.<sup>10</sup> There are seven varying exegetical tools and skills Protestants have consistently used over the years to interpret Scripture.<sup>11</sup>

First, proper exegetical techniques will begin with prayer. Apart from the discipline of prayer, there can be no true sense of the meaning of the Bible if the Christian interpreter is not in a godly state. The Spirit of God must illumine the truth of the biblical text in order for the reader to really understand what it means.<sup>12</sup>

Second, proper exegesis involves using the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith “dictates that no true interpretation of a passage can be contrary to the overall expression of biblical faith.”<sup>13</sup> God cannot lie. The Bible is God’s written word. All

---

<sup>9</sup>For more on the presuppositions of evangelical interpretation, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 39-57.

<sup>10</sup>Henry M. Knapp, “Protestant Biblical Interpretation,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 633.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 634.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.* This affirmation explicitly rejects the modern historical-critical methods adhered to in many approaches to the biblical text. The biblical text is not merely a human record. The postmodern approach to texts must also be rejected because the postmodern does not want to affirm an external authority that would include an objective meaning for the text. Also see Martin Luther, *Career of the Reformer IV, Luther’s Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann and Lewis W. Spitz (St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1957), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM] (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 34:285/ Luther insisted that prayer must inform interpretation.

<sup>13</sup>Knapp, “Protestant Biblical Interpretation” 634.

Christian doctrine flows faithfully from the Bible. The analogy of faith is the framework for all biblical interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

Third, proper exegesis of a passage requires Scripture to interpret Scripture (the analogy of Scripture). The plainer texts inform the more obscure texts.<sup>15</sup> God is his own best expositor. One text cannot contradict another text. The Bible is a unified word of God.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, proper exegesis of a passage requires a precise study of Scripture. The Scriptures may be studied better through the use of “a working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew.”<sup>17</sup> Use of the biblical languages is a norm for pre-critical and modern interpretative methodologies.<sup>18</sup>

Fifth, proper exegesis of a passage requires a linguistic and contextual examination of the biblical texts.<sup>19</sup> The expositor benefits from the study of nuances in words. There are different genres represented in Scripture. Handling these varying styles appropriately is the job of the true exegete.<sup>20</sup>

Sixth, proper exegesis of a passage involves considering the scope and occasion of a passage. What is the main purpose of the human author of Scripture in the first place? This question leads to discovering the scope of a passage. The scope also tells how the

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 635.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 636.

<sup>20</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 8-9. See the rest of Osborne’s introduction (5-15) for a very similar approach to evangelical interpretation.

passage fits into overall Christian belief (similar to the analogy of faith in this regard).<sup>21</sup> The exegete also considers the place of the passage in the overall scheme of redemptive history. The exegete also examines the specific historical occasion for the biblical text.<sup>22</sup>

Seventh, the last part of proper exegesis is the task of applying the text to contemporary situations.<sup>23</sup> Application of a text asks the “so what” question. What does the text have to do with anything *now* during the day and age of those reading it? If all the other parts of exegesis are observed and this one thing is neglected, then exegesis has not really been done.<sup>24</sup>

One last word of prolegomena should be mentioned before delving into the texts on holiness. Since this chapter is approaching exegesis from an evangelical perspective, it is important to note that the hermeneutic assumed will also be a gospel-centered interpretation. What is the gospel and what does it mean to be “gospel-centered” in approaching the text? Goldsworthy says, “The gospel [centers] on what God did for us in the incarnate Christ in order to save us from sin, the devil and death.”<sup>25</sup> The gospel does not only look backward in what Christ did on the cross, but his future accomplishments as well. It is important to remember that the gospel has its goal in “the new creation where the people of God redeemed by Christ will enjoy the presence of God for eternity.”<sup>26</sup> The focus of interpretation is ultimately what the Scriptures say about

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Also see how redemptive history plays an important role in interpretation in general in Barry Webb, “Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Interpreting God’s Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 47-74.

<sup>23</sup>Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 637.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. Chap. 5 of this dissertation asks the “so what” question as it concerns the conclusions of the exegesis of the passages under consideration concerning the progressive nature of sanctification.

<sup>25</sup>Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 58.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 59.

Christ and then how believers are *connected* to Christ. The gospel is “a one-for-all finished and perfect event done *for us* by another.”<sup>27</sup> The gospel is God’s word to mankind about Christ. The experience of mankind must be interpreted by the word of God. The focus cannot be on self and mankind’s human autonomy, but rather on Christ and what he has done for mankind according to the will of the Father in heaven.<sup>28</sup> The best reading of the Scripture is that reading which exalts Christ and encourages mankind to humbly rely on him. Without reading the biblical text in this way, exegesis is, at best, an academic hubris. With these hermeneutical assumptions set forth, believers may read and interpret the Bible with a truly “biblical” approach.

### **The Nature of Progress in Pauline Sanctification**

Paul is, without a doubt, one of the clearest biblical teachers on New Testament holiness. In his letters he often teaches on the doctrine of holiness and how Christians need to realize they are holy in Christ Jesus. Holiness is not something Christians need to reach for outside of Christ, but something that they already are in Christ because of what Jesus has done for them.<sup>29</sup> This section considers the teaching of Romans 6:1-14 as it develops Paul’s argument for union with Christ in his work on the cross being what gives new life to believers and frees them from the power of sin and death. It is impossible to see how this passage sets the stage for all theological conversation on the doctrine of sanctification and how it is progressive.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>As is evident later in this chap., Christians still must “strive for holiness” (Heb 12:14 ESV), but this striving is *not apart from pursuit of Christ Himself and emulation of His character and His ways*. Christians do not strive for holiness apart from Christ. They do not reach for something other than knowing and living for Christ.

<sup>30</sup>As mentioned previously, many theologians, especially those of the Reformed influence, use this passage to start discussions on sanctification and union with Christ. See Anthony A. Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 63;

Paul's *magnum opus* is the book of Romans. In Romans he teaches on the essence of faith and how God's righteousness has been revealed in the gospel (Rom 1:16). What happens to believers after they are considered righteous because of their faith in the gospel? Paul has just been "expounding the central fact of redemptive history: what was forfeited in Adam has been regained in the Last Adam, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12-21)."<sup>31</sup> Romans 5:20 affirms the principle that increased sin leads to increased grace. The logical conclusion for some of Paul's readers was to think that indulgence in sin led to a glorification of the grace. Instead of agreeing with this wrong thinking, Paul emphatically denies the conclusions of his opponents who said to "go on sinning so that grace may increase" (NIV).<sup>32</sup> Paul wishes to take on the "task of making intelligible in terms of the reality of everyday life, of the community, and of the individual, the universal realization of eschatological life which he has set forth in ch. 5."<sup>33</sup> Paul brings this realization to his readers by telling them they have been freed from the powers of sin and the law. He calls Christians to confirm because of inner necessity in "their personal life the change of aeons that has been effected."<sup>34</sup>

---

Sinclair B. Ferguson, "The Reformed View," in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 52-60; and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 747-51. Also see Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 96-103 for a treatment of a more definitive-focused position on sanctification that looks similar to some of the Lutheran theologians (i.e., Forde and Bayer) mentioned in chap. 2 of this dissertation.

<sup>31</sup>Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 53.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 159.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

### **The Grounds for Pauline Sanctification: Romans 6:1-14**

Paul begins Romans 6 with a “lively question-and-answer style” that he employed earlier in the letter (cf. 3:1-9, 27-31; 4:1-12).<sup>35</sup> Paul asks, “What shall we say, then?” (Τι οὖν εἰπούμεν).<sup>36</sup> As mentioned previously, it only make sense that grace enables redeemed humanity to embrace licentiousness. Sin seems to exist “for the purpose” (ἵνα) of grace. “Shall we go on sinning?” is the appropriate question given Paul’s freeing sense of justification and his previous statements in Romans 5.<sup>37</sup> The increase of sin has led to the increase of grace (Rom 5:20). Whomever the “devil’s advocate” is Paul is correcting, Paul wants Christians to be sure to understand that “the gospel of grace, properly interpreted, leads not to licentiousness but to righteousness (now understood as godly living).”<sup>38</sup> The gospel comes with its own obedience and righteousness. The righteous standing of believers is demonstrated in godly living, which flows from faith in God’s promises.

The reason for believers break with the power of sin should be obvious according to Paul’s logic.<sup>39</sup> How can believers still be under the power of something to

---

<sup>35</sup>Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 355.

<sup>36</sup>All translations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>37</sup>Ἐπιμενωμεν τη αμαρτια is in the subjunctive present and gives the sense of a continuing possible action. It could also be translated “shall we keep on (or continue) sinning.” The dative of τη αμαρτια shows the power and realm of sin. It could be translated as “in the realm (or reign) of sin.” Sin is not viewed here as simply a set of moral failures, but is personalized as a power that controls. Paul uses the definite article to convey this idea of “the power of sin” as a controlling realm and reign. See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 163. Also see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 354, and Ferguson, “The Reformed View,” 55.

<sup>38</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 354.

<sup>39</sup>Paul emphatically rejects the notion that grace gives Christians an excuse to sin *even more* than they did before. Paul’s μη γενοιτα (“by no means!”) shows his violent rejection of such a blatantly false representation of his teaching.

which he has died? Before becoming believers, the Romans were under sin's power. The only way to get away from that oppressive rule was to die. The dative of "disadvantage" (die *to* sin, *τη αμαρτια*) conveys the idea of detriment. Believers dying to sin means there is a separation that is to sin's detriment. Again, the personification of sin as a powerful rule and realm of the age under Adam is conveyed.<sup>40</sup> "Dying to sin" means being "separated from sin" in such a way that the separation impedes the work and purposes of sin's reign in humanity.

What caused the divorce between humanity and the powerful realm and reign of sin? Death was required. Specifically, this "death" came for all believers who have been baptized into the death of Christ.<sup>41</sup> Water baptism was the public confession of a believer that, like Christ, they have died, been buried, and now were raised to walk in newness of life. Baptism is a picture of union with Christ. This union with Christ shows a believer's connection with both Christ's death and resurrection. A believer both dies and lives with Christ (Phil 1:21; Gal 2:20). Seifrid says, "Baptism into Christ entails baptism into his death and *thereby* participation in his resurrection."<sup>42</sup> It is the ritual, like marriage, that shows two people joined together in holy matrimony. The believer is now a part of Christ's family. The believer is now under the rule and reign of Christ, not any rule from his previous life (sin, death, and Adam). What has happened at the cross with the death of Christ has been actualized in baptism.<sup>43</sup> The experience of baptism represents

---

<sup>40</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 357.

<sup>41</sup>The word for "were baptized" is *εβαπτισθημεν*. The indicative active passive verb shows the passive nature of the work being done *to* believers. Moo also argues that "baptism into Christ" refers to the ritual of water baptism, which had become common practice for Christians by this time. See his convincing arguments in Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 359-60.

<sup>42</sup>Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 9:72.

<sup>43</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 168. There are a plethora of exegetical problems with Rom 6:5. What does *ομοιωματι του θανατου* mean? The best

the changing of the powers over the life of believers. Since Christ's death "justifies" believers, because believers have died with Christ, the power of death is no more and the reign of Christ has begun.<sup>44</sup> The participatory death of believers in Christ's death on the cross has released them from sin by justifying them (Rom 6:7). The old man is crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6). The "old man"<sup>45</sup> being crucified means that the "body of sin" (το σωμα της αμαρτιας) is no longer able to interact with the world in the same way. Though there are some moral interactions with the world that will change, the idea of the "body of sin" being "done away with" (NIV) means the believer has now entered into the era of Christ's reign. Bondage to sin no longer characterizes the believer's life. Christ's life is the life of the believers. The cross-connection cannot be ignored. These realities take place in the cross and have implications and are actualized when the believer shows they are united with Christ in baptism.<sup>46</sup>

While union with Christ in baptism is the theme of Romans 6:3-4 and death to sin and crucifixion with Christ is the theme of Romans 6:5-7, Paul's focus in Romans 6:8-10 is the new life the believer has in Christ.<sup>47</sup> Romans 6:8 continues the logical

---

understanding is probably the "form of death" like Christ. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 368-371.

<sup>44</sup>δεδικαίωται is often translated as "has been set free." Seifrid explains that this "statement has remained obscure to most interpreters, who generally have not seen that for Paul justification carries associations of power." See Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 72.

<sup>45</sup>παλαιος ημων ανθρωπος, translated as "old man," is a relational more than ontological term. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 373. The adoption of this "relational" language does *not* mean Christians are without a sin "nature," but the focus of this passage is mainly dealing with realm and relationship language as it concerns eras in redemptive history (under Adam, under law, under sin, under death, in Christ, etc.).

<sup>46</sup>One of the best ways to describe baptism is as a rite of passage that shows the cleansing nature of water and the Spirit of Christ making believers new (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:5; Eph 5:25-27). For more on the cult of baptism, see Thomas Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 374.

<sup>47</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 170.

argument of Paul from verse 5. The “if p then q” syllogism is obviously connecting union with Christ’s life to union with Christ’s resurrection. Verse 8 has a strong confessional element (πιστευομεν, “we believe”). Faith is what makes believers right with God. This faith connects believers to all the benefits of Christ. The faith of believers is tied to eschatological realities of resurrection with Christ.<sup>48</sup> Faith is what brings union with Christ. Union with Christ brings resurrection. Believers are already shown to be dead and alive in Christ in baptism. They are also *going* to be raised and no longer (presently *and* in the future) have death “mastering” them.<sup>49</sup>

In verse 10, Paul uses the same language as in verse 2 above. The difference in his argument is that he is not talking about believers, but Christ himself. Christ is said to have died to sin once for all (τη αμαρτια απεθανεν).<sup>50</sup> How does Christ “die to sin” considering he never sinned? It is important to remember that “dying to sin” has to do with living in the “old man” under an old reign. The terms are primarily salvation-historical, not ontological and moral. Moo says, “Just as death once had ‘authority’ over Christ because of his full identification with sinful people in the ‘old age,’ so that other ruling power of the old age, sin, could be said to have ‘authority’ over Christ.”<sup>51</sup> The “life to God” is the goal of Christ’s death.<sup>52</sup>

Since Christ has conquered death and sin, believers now conquer death and sin

---

<sup>48</sup>“Eschatological realities” include both the reality of Christ’s resurrection being the beginning of resurrection for believers as well as the future, literal bodily resurrection that takes place with the return of Christ. For Paul, union and resurrection begin and end with believers finding themselves in union with Christ. See Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (London: Paternoster, 2006), 59-64.

<sup>49</sup> ουκετι κυριευει is the idea that sin no longer is the lord of the Christian.

<sup>50</sup> Compare to Rom 6:2, Επιμενωμεν τη αμαρτια.

<sup>51</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 379.

<sup>52</sup> Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 142n35.

through their relationship with Christ. Just as Adam's sin condemned humanity, the new humanity (believers in Christ) now overcomes death and sin. Christ grants a new citizenship of freedom *from* sin and freedom *to* life for God. Seifrid says, "the 'history' of the fallen human being, the sinner, is swallowed up in faith by the history of Christ, namely, his incarnation, cross, and resurrection."<sup>53</sup>

Ferguson summarizes Paul's logic in this way: (1) we receive forgiveness of sins through Christ, (2) this reception involves being united to Christ, (3) the Christ to whom we are united died to sin, (4) since we are united to him, we also have died to sin, (5) if we have died to sin, we cannot continue living in it, and (6) therefore, we cannot continue in sin that grace may increase.<sup>54</sup>

In verse 11, Paul wants believers to "consider"<sup>55</sup> themselves dead in regard to sin because of their connection to Christ. For Paul, Christ has overcome the power of sin (Rom 6:9) and, logically, Christ's union to believers means they may assume freedom from sin, especially in terms of the "tyranny" of sin.<sup>56</sup> Believers "consider" or "count"<sup>57</sup> their standing with God as one that is free from sin and righteous in Christ. Both these

---

<sup>53</sup>Mark A. Seifrid, "Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:25-21," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 225.

<sup>54</sup>Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 54.

<sup>55</sup>The Greek word λογίζεσθε assumes that believers should regard themselves as not only *righteous* in God's sight (see Rom 4:3, 5), but also regard themselves as dead to the *power* of sin as well. In Rom 4:3-5, Paul quotes Gen 15:6, the foundation for his argument for righteousness by faith (cf. Gal 3:6ff): καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. Christians are to "judge" themselves in such a way as to be certain that because of the work of Christ there is a certainty of their death to sin in Christ (cf. the use of κρίναντας in 2 Cor 5:14). See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 171. Also see n. 57 below.

<sup>56</sup>See Colin Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 267.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 266n128. Believers should consider themselves to be dead as it concerns their relationship to sin and its power. In the same way, believers consider themselves to be alive in their relationship with God.

concepts are clearly joined in Paul's argument. Though there is not an ethical indulgence in sin (Rom 6:1), there is a very real sense in which being dead to sin is not wholly different from being righteous in Christ (Rom 4:3, 5).<sup>58</sup> Believers are "alive" instead of "dead" only because of their status "in Christ." Christ, as their representative head, brings believers new life. What applies to him applies to believers. He died for believers' sins so that believers may have life.<sup>59</sup> There is now a joined life union that believers share with Christ. This life is unique in all of creation because it is based on a resurrected and indestructible life.<sup>60</sup> God is the producer of all life who grants new life based on the new era inaugurated by Christ to all those who are connected with his Son.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup>The reference in Rom 4:3, like the reference in Rom 6:11, has a "bookkeeping metaphor in mind." See N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 541. It is important to keep in mind that the sign of baptism is a type of "shorthand for the whole conversion-initiation experience: repentance and faith focused in their submission to baptism on the part of human beings and the concomitant forgiveness and bestowal of the Spirit of God." See Kruse, *Romans*, 267.

<sup>59</sup>See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 380-81 n150. Moo says, "It is Paul's understanding of 'salvation history' that best explains the general meaning of his 'in Christ' language. The 'informing' theology is Paul's understanding of Christ as the representative head of a new age, or realm." He goes on to say that "for us to be 'in Christ' means, then, to belong to Christ as our representative, so that the decisions applied to him apply also to us." *Ibid.*, 381 n150. Christ brings a new age for all those who believe in him: the age of life that exists for the purpose of God.

<sup>60</sup>Heb 7:16: Christ's indestructible life is part of the basis of his better priesthood as he represents believers before God. Christ's life will not pass away and neither will the new life based on the indestructible new era inaugurated by Christ and completely consummated in the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21-22). This new life never passes away.

<sup>61</sup>See Acts 17:25, "He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." Michael Horton argues that creatures only have derivative power and freedom because of their analogical relationship to God. From a similar line of argument based on Horton's understanding of creaturely freedom, the life of creatures comes from God, who is life. Believers are the only ones who can have life because they have died to sin, which has the power to separate creatures from God (i.e., spiritual death), the producer of life. God is life. The life of believers is a finite analogy of the life of God in Christ. God does not give his own life to believers (univocally), but gives his life, *in* Christ, for them to produce life in them. Christ's resurrected life brings God's life to believers. Michael Horton, *The Christian Life: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 261-62.

Verse 12 transitions<sup>62</sup> from Paul's thoughts on life in Christ to what actually happens for believers who "consider" that they are "dead to sin and alive to God."<sup>63</sup> There is a practical outworking of "considering" that Paul spells out in 6:12-13.<sup>64</sup> There are two imperatives in verses 12-13 which are grounded by a powerful indicative in verse 14. The prohibitions are empowered by the promise and salvation-historical realities of believers being "under grace" since they are alive "in Christ" in verse 14. The imperatives are impossible without the promise.<sup>65</sup>

The first prohibition, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body," is thought by some to assume the power of sin ("body of sin"<sup>66</sup>) in some specific way over Roman believers and Paul. The grammatical basis for this conclusion is not very strong.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup>The transition is made with the word οὖν, therefore. Paul is well-known for his utilization of "therefore" and how the word logically connects the theological indicative with the practical imperative. It comes as no surprise that the imperative passive verb, Μὴ βασιλεύετω, "do not let rule/reign," comes after Paul's "therefore." Sin's oppressive power still reigns in world, though it is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). As the stinger of a dead wasp still has venom that can cause injury, so the power of sin, even though it has been conquered for believers by Christ, can still influence the "mortal body" (Rom 6:12). Believers must actively respond to what they are "in Christ." It is important to note that Paul is not merely "transitioning" into imperatives. V. 14 is the basis for the imperatives given in vv. 12 and 13. Paul is still focusing on what it means to be baptized into Christ's life and death (Rom 6:3-4). See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 176.

<sup>63</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 381.

<sup>64</sup>Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 267.

<sup>65</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 381.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 381n71.

<sup>67</sup>See the arguments of Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 382nn153-54. Moo argues that a number of grammarians have argued against the idea that the present tense in prohibitions suggests a need to negate actions that are *already* taking place. He shows that there is a lot of disagreement on the exact significance and pattern of the present (used in vv. 12 and 13a) and aorist tenses (in 13b) in these verbs. Though Roman believers still did and would wrestle with sin, the context does not give any indication that a *specific* incident was in mind when Paul wrote these verses. Paul seems to be giving a more *general* command to the Roman believers to both warn and encourage them to trust God's new life in Christ to work in and through them. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 382.

Rather, it seems that Paul is emphasizing that “sin’s tyranny has been broken so they are free to choose not to sin, but they must continue to choose not to do so.”<sup>68</sup> It would be illogical for Paul to say sin was reigning over believers when he had just said believers were to “consider” themselves dead to sin (v. 11). Believers are under the rule of a new era, the reign of the Lord Christ. Even though there are new salvation-historical realities that are breaking into the present into the lives of believers, the “mortal body” (τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι) still has “passions” (ἐπιθυμίας) that need to be overcome. This “mortal body” is not simply referring to some Hellenistic philosophical concept of the “physical versus the spiritual,” where the “physical” is evil and the “spiritual” is good. This “body” is also not a “body of sin” from which we should distance ourselves. Rather, it is probably best to consider this “body” to be the whole person as it relates and interacts with the world, but physically and spiritually.<sup>69</sup> This body of worldliness is still in tension with a world that is passing away and a new world bound up with the new realities of union and life with Christ. This “body” is threatened from without by wickedness and from within because sin still affects those things that are passing away in this old era.<sup>70</sup> In other words, in Romans 6:1-14, Paul can

distinguish, then, between the body of sin and death, the mortal body and the glorified body, and thus contrast existence in the [fallenness] of this world, in the temptation (*Anfechtung*) which accompanies earthly temporality, and existence in the resurrection reality which is no longer exposed to threat.<sup>71</sup>

The “passions” of the “mortal body” arise because of the influence of the fallen

---

<sup>68</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 268.

<sup>69</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383.

<sup>70</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 176-77.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 176. *Anfechtung*, which is Luther’s concept of temptation/suffering/testing, is bound to occur if believers are actually living out the new life realities Paul discusses in this passage. Endurance of the temptations proves that believers are authentic (as well as the promises of God in Rom 6:14) and really are alive in Christ. Enduring through life as believers with a body that is passing away is part of keeping God’s promise that “sin will have no dominion over you.”

world. Though the battle fought by believers against the world is spiritual in nature, it is won or lost in the daily decisions believers make concerning the use of their bodies. These bodies are still participating in the “weakness, suffering, and dissolution of this age.”<sup>72</sup> These bodies will continue to be weak until they become glorified bodies (Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 15:53). Until that time, believers must struggle with “passions” that belong to the mortal body.<sup>73</sup> Passion is not always a bad thing for Paul (cf. Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17), but the vast majority of the time “passion” stands for desires that are against God’s will.<sup>74</sup> The “mortal body” is tempted, not only by physical appetites (commonly known as “lusts”), but by the desires to be autonomous, to covet (Rom 7:7-8), and to dominate others.<sup>75</sup> If believers give in to the desires to assert themselves over others and be self-driven in general,<sup>76</sup> then they will fall under the same old reign as they were before they were “in Christ.” They will be under the rule of sin and death if they succumb to those wicked desires.<sup>77</sup> In other words, believers should not allow sin’s influence to continue

---

<sup>72</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383.

<sup>73</sup>Whether the “passions” *belong* to the body (ἀὐτοῦ being a genitive of possession) or come *from* the body (ἀὐτοῦ being a genitive of source) does not make that much difference. Either way the mortal body is weak and subject to sinful influences. For the purposes of this argument, a genitive of possession will be assumed because of context. Paul is not arguing against the “mortal body,” but against the “body of sin” and the “old self” of Rom 6:6. The “mortal body” can and should be used by believers to indulge in righteous actions (Rom 6:13b), which would assume that it is not inherently the reason for the desires that go against the will of God.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. Moo says, “This is the usual meaning of ἐπιθυμία in Paul.” Cf. Rom 1:24; 7:7, 8; 13:14; Gal 5:16, 24; Eph 2:3; 4:22; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; 1 Tim 6:9; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:6; 4:3. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383n161.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>This desire is not wholly unlike the temptation of Adam to rule over himself (i.e., be his own ruler/boss) independent from God. The desire to be independent of God and rule over others is something that continually tempts anyone in this world, which is influenced by Satan to be autonomous, especially as it concerns God’s revealed will for his creatures.

<sup>77</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177.

in their mortal bodies as it did in their bodies of sin. There is a difference in rule in the life of believers and so there should be a different type of service demonstrated by believers' bodies.<sup>78</sup>

In verse 13 there is another imperative: "Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness." The imperative is followed by an alternative action for believers: "present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness." The real question in this verse is: What is the meaning of "members" and "instruments?" (τὰ μέλη and ὄπλα). From the context, both words are connected to how the mortal body must function.<sup>79</sup> Paul has become more specific in his exhortation by emphasizing the importance of the body (which belongs to believers) doing acts that honor God. The "members" refer, not to body parts, but rather to "the natural capacities" that believers are able to command *in general*.<sup>80</sup> The idea is that believers should use their abilities (i.e., "members") to honor God (cf. Rom 12:1-2). As in 1 Corinthians 12:12ff., where the body of Christ has many "members" that are able to do different things, so the "mortal body" has "members" that function in different ways.<sup>81</sup> Believers should constantly avoid presenting<sup>82</sup> the abilities they have to doing what represents the old era they used to live under. They should not use their abilities as weapons for the old age. Believers use their weapons to serve a new

---

<sup>78</sup>Ibid. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 383-84.

<sup>79</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177.

<sup>80</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 384. This broader understanding of μέλη is supported by passages like Rom 7:5 and 7:23, both of which use the word "flesh" (τῇ σαρκί) to convey ideas of the fallen people as a whole rather than physical flesh. Ibid., 384n166.

<sup>81</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177.

<sup>82</sup>The present tense of μηδὲ παριστάνετε conveys a continual action that must be avoided. Believers must *actively* combat the passions that would lead to unrighteous behavior.

master.<sup>83</sup> The imperative “do not let sin reign” (from Rom 6:12) is similar to “do not present” (v. 13) in the present tense.<sup>84</sup> In a similar way that believers must avoid letting sin reign over them they must also not present their “natural capacities” for attacking (as “weapons”) their new king, God. Since believers follow God now, it makes sense that they would “present themselves” to him for service in his kingdom. They will constantly give themselves in service to God (παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς) instead of giving themselves in service to sin.<sup>85</sup> There are only two ways to live (see Rom 6:16ff.), so there can be no neutral standing for believers.<sup>86</sup> For those who have been brought “from death to life” by God (v. 13), it is impossible to act like dead people again. If believers are alive in Christ, then they are serving God and making a practice of using their mortal bodily faculties for the purpose of righteous deeds.<sup>87</sup> Believers must obey with their bodies because it is

---

<sup>83</sup>The word ὄπλα refers more to “weapons” instead of “tools,” as it does in Rom 13:12, 2 Cor 6:7, and 10:4. See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177 and Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 384. Moo understands ὄπλα in relationship to presenting weapons for service to God (παριστάνετε) against sin’s tyranny and does not give preeminence to the military motif as Käsemann does. The focus is on *servicing* God, not *fighting* for him. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 384n168.

<sup>84</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 384.

<sup>85</sup>This positive command to “present yourselves to God” is, unlike the earlier commands from Rom vv. 12 and 13a, are in the aorist tense. It seems that the aorist is picking up the meaning from the other verbs and carrying along the same understanding from the previous statements. Instead of some special force of its own, it is picking up the motif of what has already been said. Mark Seifrid says that “the aorist tense” is the “vanilla” of the verbs. This tense enhances what is already there (in a similar way as vanilla flavoring enhances drink and foods) without introducing some new special purpose. Mark Seifrid, “The Aorist Tense” (classroom lecture, 22240—*Greek Syntax*, Spring 2000). Paul’s focus is on the prohibitions and the natural outworking of *not* doing those things he prohibits is *doing* righteous deeds (the natural opposite of the deeds of the body of sin). See Moo’s support of this understanding of aorist in this passage as well in Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 385.

<sup>86</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 385.

<sup>87</sup>This reading and understanding of both “unrighteousness” and “righteousness” assumes that ἀδικίας is an objective genitive, which suggests *purpose* rather than a genitive of *quality*, which would make “unrighteousness” describe “weapons.” See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 385n170. “Righteousness” does not only have forensic connotations (as in Rom 5:21, the last place Paul mentioned “righteousness”), but must be accompanied by a change in obedience that anticipates the bodily resurrection, “which

“necessary as an anticipation of the reality of bodily resurrection.”<sup>88</sup> Believers experience an eschatological struggle for dominance that will continue going on in the world until the new heavens and new earth come to pass.<sup>89</sup>

Verse 14 comforts believers by empowering them with gospel-promise truth: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” The promise and command are united based on the salvation-historical realities that are described as “under law” and “under grace.” Believers need to understand that the whole reason for the imperative is because it has already been based on the foundation of God’s promise.<sup>90</sup> The tyrannical power that is sin *will not* have power over believers.<sup>91</sup> In the war against sin, believers can be encouraged that they will be victorious for two reasons: (1) they are “under grace” and (2) they are not “under law.”<sup>92</sup> The surprising part of Paul’s argument is this: Why bring up the law after talking so much about grace and sin? Does the law have anything to do with freedom from sin?

Moo points out, “That the law is so suddenly brought onto the scene at the end of this paragraph reveals the extent to which Paul’s presentation of his gospel in this letter

---

sets us in service.” See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177.

<sup>88</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 177.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid. A new obedience must accompany a new life in Christ. See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 258. There is a change in lordship for believers. See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 179.

<sup>90</sup>γὰρ gives the *reason* for everything that happens in vv. 12-13. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387.

<sup>91</sup>οὐ κυριεύσει is the future indicative tense of the verb and points to something that eventually happens as part of the eschatological hope believers should be able to enjoy, but also to the fact that *now* is also a time to enjoy God’s promise. Sin is a defeated foe and cannot gain ultimate victory. Sin will never master believers, both now and in the future. See Moo, *The Epistles to the Romans*, 387.

<sup>92</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 269.

never moves too far from the salvation-historical question of Old Covenant and New.”<sup>93</sup> The law, in and of itself, is not bad. Still, believers are not under the Mosaic law.<sup>94</sup> Romans 5:20 and 7:1-6 provide the context for this understanding of “law.” Paul presents the Mosaic Law as “a force that brought condemnation of sin (cf. 4:15; implicitly in 5:13-14; 7:4).”<sup>95</sup> This law has a condemning effect that seems to be the focus for Paul in this passage. For believers to be not “under law” means that the condemning power of the law does not touch them. They are not in submission to the consequences that inevitably come to those who break God’s law: death. Christian obedience to the imperatives that Paul just gave (vv. 12-13) is *not synonymous* with obedience to the law given through Moses. Moo states,

“Under law,” then, is another way of characterizing “the old realm.” This explains why Paul can make release from the law a reason for the Christian’s freedom from the power of sin: as he has repeatedly stated, the Mosaic law had had a definite sin-producing function: it has brought “knowledge of sin” (3:20), “wrath” (4:15), “transgression” (5:13-14), and an increase in the severity of sin (5:20). The law, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:56, is “the power of sin.” This means, however, that there can be no final liberation from the power of sin without a corresponding liberation from the power and lordship of the law. To be “under law” is to be subject to the constraining and sin-strengthening regime of the old age; to be “under grace” is to be subject to the new age in which freedom from the power of sin is available.<sup>96</sup>

Just because believers are not under the reign of law does not mean they are free from all lords. The freedom believers enjoy is not “seen in terms of autonomy and

---

<sup>93</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387.

<sup>94</sup>For why ὑπὸ νόμον is referring to Mosaic Law, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387-88.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 388.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 389. Moo also gives three caveats to his statements about being “free from law”: (1) the law may not be described as having authority over different groups (Gentiles and Jews during various parts of salvation history) in a straightforward and neat temporal way, (2) the law is not intrinsically negative (unlike the powers of sin and death), and (3) individual laws from the Mosaic law may still be used in the Christian life. Ibid., 390.

emancipation,” but rather is understood as freedom from sin’s reign and freedom to enjoy God’s reign.<sup>97</sup>

Romans 6:1 and 6:14 bracket Paul’s discussion on why being “under grace” means believers will not serve sin as their master.<sup>98</sup> Paul anticipates his polemic against those who are arguing that believes living “under grace” breeds sin through verses. 1-14. What does “under grace” mean that Paul would unashamedly contrast it with being “under law”? Since believers are “under grace” they “have been buried with Christ at baptism into death so that they may live a new life (6:4), and their old selves have been crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be done away so that they should no longer be slaves to sin (6:6).”<sup>99</sup> The power of sin is the law (cf. 1 Cor 15:56). If sin loses its power over believers since they are “under grace,” that means all of God’s good promises can come to them. Believers will never be sin’s slaves again and will never have to worry about death in regards to spiritual separation from God and even the sting of physical death because victory over that power of death has been overcome through the sacrifice of Christ for them (6:4-6).

### **Sanctification Leads to New Obedience: Romans 6:15-23**

There is activity in the life of believers. This activity reflects the influence of a new era, a new lord, and a new obedience that all comes from believers’ union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Romans 6:15-23 describes what being a slave to righteousness looks like.

The question Paul poses at the beginning of verse 15 is very similar to the question in verse 1. He says, “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under

---

<sup>97</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 178.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

grace?” After all of his teaching on *not* being under sin’s dominion it might come as a surprise that Paul wishes to restate this question. Could it be mere rhetoric to further enforce his point? Why does Paul ask “What then?” (Τί οὖν). He does so because many hearers (and perhaps even immature believers) would understand Paul’s teaching on freedom from being “under law” to assume freedom to live however they chose. Paul anticipates this objection and argues that such thinking is preposterous when he says, “By no means!” (μὴ γένοιτο). Paul wants his hearers to understand that he is teaching a new type of slavery: bondage to Christ. Paul uses δούλους (“slave”) and the verbal derivative a total of eight times in verses 16-22 to make it clear that autonomy is not an option for believers.<sup>100</sup> Paul uses slave imagery throughout this section to emphasize the importance of being “enslaved” to God’s rule now that believers are enjoying the benefits of being “under grace.” Paul uses the “language of slavery/control that runs throughout 6:15-23, alluding to matters well known in the first-century Mediterranean culture.”<sup>101</sup>

In Romans 6:16 Paul connects his understanding of “presenting” (παριστάνετε) from verse 13 to two types of slavery: slaves of sin (which leads to death) and slaves to obedience (which leads to righteousness).<sup>102</sup> Neutrality is not an option.<sup>103</sup> If sin demonstrates its power over someone, then that person is going to die. The “death” (θάνατον) described in verse 16 “may include reference to physical death and present spiritual death, but in this context it means mainly ‘eternal’ death: the final and eternal exclusion from God’s presence that is the ultimate result of sin.”<sup>104</sup> Presenting oneself to

---

<sup>100</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 396n1.

<sup>101</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 280.

<sup>102</sup>In the Greek phrases, ἁμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον and ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην, it should be assumed that the εἰς shows the “consequences of the respective slaveries.” See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 399.

<sup>103</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 178-79.

<sup>104</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 399.

the slave master of sin equals death, which is separation from God and the resurrection life believers experience through union with Christ (Rom 6:5-11). Humanity's destiny is determined by whatever power it serves.<sup>105</sup> Believers obey "obedience" and the results are righteousness. The term "obedience" is used here in contrast with the neutral meaning earlier (cf. v. 16a, "obedient slaves") and has a positive connotation and infers that believers should have moral, concrete behaviors that exhibit faith in God's promises. This inference does not mean "obedience" is essentially good moral acts that authenticate the faith of believers. Seifrid says at length,

Obedience for Paul is essentially and necessarily a matter of faith, which does nothing other than lay hold of Christ. Conversely, faith which lays hold of Christ and his work is necessarily a matter of obedience. 'Justification' and 'ethics' meet in Christ crucified and risen for us.<sup>106</sup>

This "obedience" belongs to those who are slaves of Christ who have presented themselves (i.e., their "mortal bodies") as weapons of God and for the intention of righteousness (Rom 6:13). The power of obedience demonstrates itself in the lives of believers and leads to submitting to the power of righteousness.<sup>107</sup> Paul's logical conclusion is clear: the conduct of believers' is the evidence that shows who they belong to and what will eventually happen to them (see Rom 6:23).<sup>108</sup> The only two destinations are: (1) eternal life in Christ or (2) death as the results of sin.

In verse 17 Paul celebrates<sup>109</sup> the fact that the Romans believers are not slaves

---

<sup>105</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 73.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 72. "Righteousness" cannot simply mean moral compliance, but must be understood as the results of the "new" obedience experienced by believers "under grace." "Righteousness" leads to "holiness" (Rom 6:19) and becoming a slave to "right deeds" does not make sense in v. 18 because "righteousness" is being compared to the power that is "sin" and all that falls under its rule. See also Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 180, where he says, "The power of sin is confronted by eschatologically manifested righteousness as a power."

<sup>108</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 72.

<sup>109</sup>χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ. Χάρις is used in v. 17 and it means "thanks" or "gratitude."

to sin any longer: “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.” Paul introduces a “wonderful contrast in the state of affairs brought about by God in the lives of his audience (cf. the similar use of the same expression in 7:25).”<sup>110</sup> Believers are no longer under the bondage of sin, but are under the bondage that comes from being “obedient from the heart” (ὠπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας).<sup>111</sup> This obedience refers to “the time of conversion, when the Roman Christians first bowed the knee to Jesus the Lord.”<sup>112</sup> This new submission (i.e., “new obedience”) is “the resurrection of Christ projected into the present, the earthly dimension of justification by faith alone.”<sup>113</sup> Having faith in Christ and submitting to him goes together for believers. A new master comes with the “new obedience” of faith. The “standard of teaching to which you were committed” (εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασχῆς) can be nothing less than the teaching of the gospel. It is important to note that this teaching was not given to believers so much as believers *were delivered over* to it.<sup>114</sup> Believers have been baptized into this taught truth. They are to be

---

The “let it be” is assumed according the construction of the sentence. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 400n20.

<sup>110</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 281.

<sup>111</sup>The phrase ἐκ καρδίας (“from the heart”) is unique. Paul seems to be focusing on the fact that there was not merely an outward conformity, but a true inward change. This change would be a reminder of the fulfillment of the new covenant promised by Jeremiah 31:33 (“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.”). See Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 281.

<sup>112</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 400.

<sup>113</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 74.

<sup>114</sup>The passive tense of παρεδόθητε emphasizes the fact that the teaching changes believers. Paul says that hearing the preaching of the gospel is necessary for faith to come in Rom 10:14. The preached Word carries the power of God, the gospel, to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16-17). Moo says, “The new converts ‘obedience’ to this teaching is the outgrowth of God’s action in ‘handing us over’ to that teaching when we were converted.” Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 401. For more on the various meanings of τύπον διδασχῆς, see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 401-02, Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 181-82, and Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 282.

committed to the truth of the crucified Christ who brings them new life (Rom 6:4-6).<sup>115</sup> This “standard of teaching” is set between the “righteousness” in verses 16b (δικαιοσύνην) and 18 (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ). In verses 16-18, the release of believers from the slavery of the sin power is the focus. Believers are now slaves to righteousness (“enslaved to righteousness,” ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ, v. 18) and the “type” of “teaching” that made them that way must be the “teaching of righteousness” (i.e., the gospel of God’s righteousness for believers seen in Rom 1:17; 3-5).<sup>116</sup>

In verse 19 Paul speaks “in human terms” (ἀνθρώπινον λέγω) to use an everyday analogy of actual slavery “as an illustration of slavery to either sin or righteousness.”<sup>117</sup> His reasoning is simple: you are weak in your flesh (“natural limitations”) and need a good analogy to help you understand what you once were enslaved to and what you are now enslaved to.<sup>118</sup> Before their submission to Christ, believers struggled with “impurity” and “lawlessness,” which led to even greater “lawlessness.”<sup>119</sup> Sin leads to more sin. All a slave to sin knows how to do is continue in greater slavery to sin.

---

<sup>115</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 181.

<sup>116</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 281-82. Kruse shows that “teaching” can be used to describe the gospel in other place in Paul as well (16:17; Titus 1:9). Acts 2:42 describes τῇ διδασκίᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων (“the teaching of the apostles”) in a similar way. Certainly the teaching of the apostles during the early church was focused on the gospel of Christ. There is a tradition of teaching that Paul held to that was not different than the gospel preached by other apostles. Since baptism and what it represents in the cross precedes vv. 15ff, it makes sense that this tradition of apostolic teaching is certainly part of Paul’s ministry since his ministry involved bringing the gospel to the Gentiles.

<sup>117</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 283.

<sup>118</sup>Moo says, “Here Paul’s point would appear to be that human nature produces a weakness in understanding that can be overcome in this life only by the use of (imperfect) analogies.” Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 404.

<sup>119</sup>Both ἀκαθαρσία (“impurity”) and ἀνομία (“lawlessness”) deal with sexual immorality (cf. 1:24; 6:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:7) and the increase of that immorality. See Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 283. These various expressions of sin contrast with “righteousness that leads to sanctification” (δικαιοσύνη εἰς ἁγιασμόν). The type of sin is not as important as the contrast Paul is making between purity and impurity. See Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 183-84, and Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 283-84.

In the second part of verse 19, Paul “virtually repeats here the exhortation he gave in 6:13.”<sup>120</sup> Slavery to impurity and lawlessness is not an option for believers. Instead, they must present their whole selves in servile commitment to righteousness and holiness. To say that righteousness is “righteous behavior”<sup>121</sup> (which Paul sets in contrast to impure behavior) works somewhat well in the context, but neglects the fact that “righteousness” is more of a power which focuses on God’s work (outside of believers) for believers on the cross and represented in baptism (6:1-14).<sup>122</sup> If “righteousness” is really better understood justification (personified as God’s righteousness for the believer found in the cross of Christ), then it is better to say holiness is the necessary state that flows from being righteous. The challenge is the definition of *ἁγιασμόν*.

According to Moo, this word (*ἁγιασμόν*) is one of a series of words that all have the same root that Paul uses to describe Christian existence. The various uses of the word “holy” in the New Testament are rooted in the LXX, where they are used to translate words from the vdq group.<sup>123</sup> Moo says, “They [words from the holiness word group] depict the Christian as one who has been singled out, separated from the world, and dedicated to God (a “saint”).<sup>124</sup> Since the root meaning is based more on a cultic understanding of “holiness,” it makes more sense to say that the *state* of holiness is what Paul has in mind here, but that does *not* mean there is a lack of growth towards holiness (progress) and demonstration of sanctification in believers’ lives.

---

<sup>120</sup>Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 283.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>122</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 74, and Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 181-82.

<sup>123</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 405n58.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.* Moo says that it is still the Christian’s duty to achieve holiness (based on 1 Thess 4:3; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:13) even though it has, in some sense, already been achieved for him (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26).

Though believers are holy in union with Christ because his work on the cross (Rom 6:3-6; 1 Cor 6:11), believers must still show *fruit* that demonstrates their service to righteousness. Though the focus of Paul's argument is to encourage believers to submit to righteousness, he clearly recognizes that demonstrable holiness *will come about* from focusing on righteousness. Romans 6:20-23 focuses on the necessity of *fruit* in the lives of both believers and unbelievers. When believers were slaves to sin, they were "free" from righteousness (v. 20). Paul set up an understanding of true freedom that can only be had in Christ. At the same time, to further emphasize the good "slavery to God" believers enjoy, Paul says that freedom *from* God cuts one off from "righteousness" and "life." The previous sinful lifestyles of the Roman believers led to them "now being ashamed" (ὄν ἐπαισχύνεσθε).<sup>125</sup> The results (i.e., fruit) are very different for slaves of God. Since believers belong to God (i.e., he is their master), they receive holiness and eternal life. Both of these benefits are part of belonging to God and are not something believers have done (outside of the "obedience" of being given to the teaching of the gospel). If a person belongs to God, he *cannot* be a slave to sin any more. Believers have a goal that they are looking forward to: eternal life. This goal "has already been given in Christ's work and is present in our service."<sup>126</sup> Believers need to continually "receive afresh the freedom granted with baptism, which will be our unassailably only in the resurrection."<sup>127</sup> The holy living that results from believers being enslaved to God and his righteousness shows "that in reality Christian ethics is lived-out eschatology."<sup>128</sup> Sanctification flows from

---

<sup>125</sup>The "fruits" (or results) of enslavement to sin are things that any convert wishes never happened. Believers only glory in Christ now (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Cor 1:31), not in their wicked pasts.

<sup>126</sup>Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 185.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

justification and is demonstrated in a life that honors and shows Christ to be Lord (Rom 6:23). The holy life of believers may be summarized in this way:

The holy person is the one upon whom God looks and who stands in the presence of Christ. But his sanctification means that the world around perceives the service of God in earthly secularity reflected in his bodily (social) expressions of life, as in a mirror, and it thus catches a glimpse of the God who looks on his creature. The world is confronted by its true Lord through his servants and the questionability of cosmic powers is thereby exposed.<sup>129</sup>

### **Being Holy in Christ: 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11**

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians includes a greeting that should somewhat confound readers. In his beginning address of this letter Paul said that the Corinthian church has been "sanctified" and that they were "saints."<sup>130</sup> The Corinthian church was anything but "holy" in any practical sense. In fact, much of the church's behavior was more reflective of their *pagan* past than of their *spiritual* conversion through Christ (1 Cor 1:10-3). The address seems out of place and even ironic when reading the rest of the letter, but Paul does not use this address without warrant.

These "saints" were not properly demonstrating their unity in Christ and Paul's concern was to assist the church of Corinth by helping to restore their outward unity as a congregation of people who had been united to Christ. The divisions in the church of Corinth were clearly linked to sexual immorality (1 Cor 5-7) and idolatry (e.g., 1 Cor 8-14), which have a close link throughout Scripture in general.<sup>131</sup> Paul knew the particular nature of the church's sin very well. The climax of Paul's letter in chapter 15 focuses on the resurrection of Christ, which is Paul's primary foundation for ethical instructions.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 184.

<sup>130</sup>Paul uses ἡγιασμένοις and κλητοῖς ἁγίοις to show that the Corinthians were considered "holy" in their standing with God

<sup>131</sup>Idolatry and adultery/fornication are often connected in Scripture, especially in Hosea.

<sup>132</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "1 Corinthians," in *Commentary on the*

The gospel of the cross (1 Cor 1:18ff.) and resurrection (1 Cor 15) of Christ was the unifying message of Paul for the Corinthians. Paul wants to make the point in this address that *Christ* makes the Corinthians holy. The Corinthians believers have their holiness through *union with him*, not simply based on their behavior. The cross and resurrection of Christ, the beginning and climax of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, were the foundations<sup>133</sup> on which Paul appealed to the Corinthians to live in a way to conform to the holy standing he assumed at the beginning of his letter.<sup>134</sup> For Paul, the Corinthian believers were both justified and sanctified apart from themselves in Christ. These spiritual realities took place for believers in the name of Christ, not in themselves. Even though these believers were not holy in and of themselves, they were still reminded to strive for holiness in their *conduct* (i.e., ethical living) on the basis of the holiness that came through the cross of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul addressed the believers in Corinth as “the church of God” (τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ). The genitive of the construction showed possession.<sup>135</sup> The passage could easily be translated as “to the Corinthian church, which belongs to God.” Paul was already anticipating some of the divisions that he would address later in his letter. The church was not something that belonged to the Corinthians, the leaders of the church (even Paul, Cephas, or Apollos, cf. 1 Cor 1:12), or some other human being,

---

*New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 695-96.

<sup>133</sup>Strictly speaking, the “foundations” of cross and resurrection are bound together (which is the whole point of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 15). The cross is meaningless without the resurrection. The perfect life of Christ and his whole obedience to the Father in heaven needed the resurrection to be effective according to God's plan. The message of the “cross” is actually a summary of everything Christ had been and done for believers (including his resurrection).

<sup>134</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” 696.

<sup>135</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 73.

but belonged to God alone.<sup>136</sup> God would not share his glory for his work in his church (1 Cor 1:31). Paul wanted to establish from the beginning of the letter that, in a similar way that he was “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,” so were the believers of Corinth “called to be saints.”<sup>137</sup> Paul declared the holiness of the Corinthian church in a unique way that cannot be found in his other openings to letters to other churches. Paul used the phrase “to those sanctified in Christ” (ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) as a description of the church of Corinth. It is important to note that Paul uses terms for holiness twice in the same verse. Both words come from verbal and adjectival cognate forms that mean “to set apart” (verbal) or “to be someone who has been set apart to God” (adjectival).<sup>138</sup> The people of God are special and have a particular purpose, which has been ordained by God. Thiselton says, “The people of God and things of God reflect their special status as serving God, who is awesomely Other, transcendent in majesty and purity.”<sup>139</sup>

Comment [bjf1]: Heb in this note

Both the New Testament and Old Testament use the terminology of “saint” to describe people who are dedicated to God. The New Testament usage makes the term synonymous with what it means to be a Christian while the Old Testament uses the terminology to describe someone who is a true worshiper of the one true God.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>137</sup>The Greek phrases κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ (1 Cor 1:1) and κλητοῖς ἁγίοις (1 Cor 1:2) both use the words for “called” that are adjectives describing Paul’s ministry as apostle and the Corinthian believers’ standing with other believers in Christ.

<sup>138</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” 696. See New Testament references for “saint”: Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim 2:22. See Old Testament references for “saint”: Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Kgs 18:24; 1 Chr 16:8; Psalm 75:1; 79:6; 80:18; 99:6; 116:4, 13; Isa 64:7; Lam 3:55; Joel 2:32; Zeph 3:9; Zech 13:9.

The perfect passive of “having been sanctified in Christ” (ἡγιασμένοις) “denotes a past event with present effects which remain.”<sup>141</sup> What this means is that “it is God’s act in sanctifying them (that is, in separating them for himself) and not any act of their own that makes these men into the church.”<sup>142</sup> It does not mean that God only sets them apart, but then has no purpose for them. The Corinthian believers, like all believers in God’s church, are holy *so they can represent God*. Though the emphasis of the perfect passive of this phrase is on God’s work with the Corinthian believers, this emphasis does *not* mean that there will be a lack of results showing God’s work. Believers call on the name of the Lord with other believers. They declare they belong to him and to other believers as part of Christ’s public and corporate church. Corinthian believers are sanctified by Christ, but it is because they are *in* Christ that they are actually sanctified.<sup>143</sup> Christ sanctifies the Corinthians through his union with them. It is important to remember that “Paul regularly defines holiness or spirituality especially in this epistle in christological terms.”<sup>144</sup> To be sanctified because of union with Christ means the same thing as being Christ-like.<sup>145</sup> The holy status of a holy people eventually manifests in their lives as they derive their holiness from Christ himself.<sup>146</sup> Union with Christ creates holiness that overflows in communion with the world and other believers. The church (singular form that shows the united corporate body in v. 1a) must remember that they (plural form in “have been sanctified”) have been given a responsibility to live out the holy status they

---

<sup>141</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76.

<sup>142</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries, 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) 32.

<sup>143</sup>See Anthony C. Thiselton’s comments on the instrumental versus mode use of the dative used with “in” (ἐν). Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

enjoy in Christ. Paul’s shift of emphasis from the singular, corporate<sup>147</sup> to the plural, more individual-focused<sup>148</sup> shows Paul’s concern for both the church as a whole and the church as individual members.<sup>149</sup> There is an individual responsibility the Corinthian believers must embrace if they are to truly grasp what it means to be holy because of Christ.

Paul was “called” to be an apostle and, in a similar way, the Corinthian believers have been called to be holy (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις). The calling of God has made the Corinthians holy, just as Paul’s calling made him an apostle. It was not something the Corinthians initiated. Neither Paul nor the Corinthian believers could boast in their description of those who were called by God. God had a special purpose for Paul and he wanted to make sure the Corinthians understood the fact that God had a special purpose in calling them as well.<sup>150</sup> The calling of God was not only for the Corinthian believers, but also for all believers in general. Paul, therefore, reminded the Corinthian believers of their status *along with* other believers.<sup>151</sup>

The rest of verse 2 shows that the Corinthian believers had called on Christ (a confession) and that Christ did not belong to only Corinthian believers (αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν), but to all those who called on the name of Christ.<sup>152</sup> The Corinthian believers, although gifted in many ways according to Paul (1 Cor 1:5-7), did not have exclusive rights to

---

<sup>147</sup>The corporate singular focus is found in the phrase “church of God,” τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>148</sup>The transition is found when Paul shifts to the dative plural participle of “those sanctified,” ἡγιασμένοις.

<sup>149</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76-77.

<sup>150</sup>Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 32-33.

<sup>151</sup>The Greek word σὺν shows how Corinthian believers were mistaken if they thought they could live their Christian lives apart from the community of other believers.

<sup>152</sup>The phrase τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. has a strong confession element similar to Paul’s confession that “Jesus is Lord” (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς), which is a “sign and test of what it is to be a Christian believer.” Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 79.

Christ. They were part of a body of believers and part of the church of God. They were possessed by God and made God's holy possession through union with Christ. Paul begins his letter by reminding the Corinthian believers that they had a purpose and had been bought with a price. They were holy because of their union with Christ and this holiness was a characteristic of all Christians everywhere.<sup>153</sup> Though Paul said that God's church existed in Corinth, he did not want the Corinthian believers to forget that they were only a "pebble on a beach" instead of thinking they were autonomous from the rest of God's church.<sup>154</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul addressed the climax of his testimony/sermon on the power and glories of the cross of Christ. Starting with 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul reminded the believers of Corinth where they began in their faith. Their faith was not grounded in disunity (cf. vv. 10-17), but rather in the gospel of Christ's death on the cross. This message of the cross brought a wisdom that had to be contrasted with both the wisdom of the Greek culture and the demands of a sign from Jewish culture (vv. 18-22). In verse 26, Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of their "calling" once again (τὴν κλήσιν ὑμῶν) (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). The calling of God, contrary to the standards for wisdom in Corinthian culture,<sup>155</sup> was based on the wisdom of God's election (vv. 26-28). God's choice of people who the world considered to be "foolish," "weak," "low and despised," and even "things that are not" was ultimately for the purpose of shaming and humbling those who considered themselves "wise" (vv. 27-29). God would never allow

---

<sup>153</sup>The Greek phrase, ἐν παντι τόπω, "in every place," (ESV) denotes the fact that Paul understood that all believers were holy in Christ. The Corinthians were not unique in their standing

<sup>154</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 74.

<sup>155</sup>In the Greek phrase, ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, the word σάρκα should probably best be translated "flesh," which denotes the idea of how the spiritual realm of this world considers wisdom. This wisdom is not of God, but of human contrivance and issues forth from the sinful heart of mankind.

the world to boast in his presence (v. 31). Sinful humanity needed to remember its place in the created order and the Corinthian believers were no different. The Corinthian believers needed to remember their place before God as well. Yes, Corinthian believers were special and unique in the sense that they were God's special possession as κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, but they were not the *only believers* who were called saints. Neither were they *called saints* because of something they were *in and of themselves*, but rather because God had made them so "in Christ". God would glorify himself through the Corinthians by taking what the culture considered to be nothing<sup>156</sup> and turn them into trophies of his grace and vessels for his holy purpose. God used what the world considered to be *nothing* in order that he would receive *all* the glory. The focus of Paul's climax is to emphasize the *wholly other nature of the wisdom of God* in stark contrast to the world's wisdom and the sufficiency of the Corinthian believers in and of themselves. The focus for Paul is to deemphasize the greatness of the Corinthians in terms of both the eyes of world and the eyes of God. Apart from Christ, the Corinthian believers were "nothing" in terms of both godly and worldly wisdom.

The theological meaning is relatively clear in 1 Corinthians 1:30, even if modern English translations have trouble agreeing on how the text should be rendered.<sup>157</sup> This verse shows how the Corinthian believers, through God's gift of Christ to them, are now wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed. Holiness is something found *outside* of the

---

<sup>156</sup>The Greek, τὰ μὴ ὄντα, sounds a lot like Genesis language (Gen 1), showing that God does not need anything to create and make his plans work. Paul said in 1 Cor 1:26 that "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." The contrast with worldly greatest and greatest through Christ could not be greater. God's greatest would be his own high standard for those who were a part of his church, but he meets his own standards not simply *through* Christ, but by bringing the Corinthians into the realm of Christ ("in Christ"). The church of Corinth has been dedicated and appropriated to God as a possession in Christ. See Ridderbos, *Paul*, 261.

<sup>157</sup>Thiselton says that a "one-for-one rendering of each preposition, noun, and verb would leave an ambiguity or even the possibility of misunderstanding." Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 188.

Corinthians and the *reason* for the external basis of holiness is so they are unable to boast in and of themselves *apart from Christ*.

The beginning of verse 30 cannot be understated. It sets the tone and structures the redemptive realities that define the Corinthian believers as God's church. For the purposes of translating 1 Corinthians 1:30, Thiselton's translation, combined with the English Standard Version, will help make the text the clearest.<sup>158</sup> First Corinthians 1:30a says, "It is as a gift from him that you are in Christ Jesus." This translation shows how "it is from God, as his gift, that you are in Christ Jesus; that is, you owe your Christian existence to God, and not to yourselves."<sup>159</sup> This "gift" is more than just another part of the present creation. God's gift of wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption comes as a part of a *new* creation. As in 2 Corinthians 5:17, so here does "in Christ Jesus" (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) reflect Paul's understanding of the salvation-historical category of the new creation.<sup>160</sup> This new creation reality breaks into the sinful existence of the Corinthians from *outside* the sphere of worldly wisdom and *irrespective* of the standards of worth bound up with cultural standing (wealth and noble birth, cf. v. 26).<sup>161</sup> Though there are various nuances for how "in Christ" may be used in Paul,<sup>162</sup> the "foremost among these

---

<sup>158</sup>Thiselton bases this translation on two considerations: (1) the emphasis in this passage is on the God's election on the basis of God's *own* will alone combined with the Corinthians being "nothings" apart from God's actions and (2) the fact that (as in Rom 11:36) the preposition (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) governs a *genitive of origin* (from him) and also carries the added casual nuance of God as the ground of all things. God is both ground and origin of the Corinthian believers in their new creation ("out of nothing" in v. 26) in Christ Jesus. Ibid., 188-89.

<sup>159</sup>Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 59.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid. Cf. Ridderbos, *Paul*, 224ff., and Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 189.

<sup>161</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 189.

<sup>162</sup>These nuances, though helpful, are beyond the scope of this chapter's study. For more on these nuances see *ibid.*, 190n233.

distinct nuances in this verse is that of objective status and corporate solidarity.”<sup>163</sup> Paul understands status and solidarity in terms of “body” language. The Corinthian believers now belong to a body of believers who are part of the body of Christ (Cf. Acts 26:14; 1 Cor 1:2; 9:4, 5).<sup>164</sup> They are caught up in something much *bigger* than themselves since they are in Christ. Paul is reminding them of these realities to lay the foundation for redirecting their focus back on what they have in Christ and away from the fleshly wisdom of sinful humanity that they were obviously indulging in (Cf. 1 Cor 3). The new creation reality of being “in Christ” brings a new wisdom as well. This wisdom is, ironically, considered to be “foolishness” to the worldly Corinthians who are perishing because they do not listen to the message of the cross (1 Cor 1:18ff.). This wisdom does not come by itself; rather it comes with the righteousness, holiness, and redemption that are a gift from God to the Corinthian believers both *through* and *in* Christ.<sup>165</sup>

As the wisdom of God for the Corinthian believers,<sup>166</sup> Christ is righteous, holiness, and redemption. It is significant that “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) is only mentioned in 1:30 in this epistle. The verb form appears in 1 Corinthians 4:4 and 6:11. The righteousness Paul speaks of here is an alien righteousness. It comes “from God” (ἀπὸ θεοῦ) and, therefore, God can be the only one credited with its origin and can also be the only active subject. It is *God’s* righteousness *for* the Corinthian believers. This

---

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>The ἡμῶν should be understood as meaning *on our behalf*, as a dative of advantage. For more details on the controversies on the relationship between the four qualities that come with being in Christ (translated “wisdom,” “righteousness,” “sanctification,” and “redemption”). Ibid., 190-91, and 190-91nn234-45. This chap. assumes that Thiselton is correct and that the four qualities should belong together, characterize Christ, and are imparted by Christ. Ibid., 191.

<sup>166</sup>For the purposes of this chap., it is enough to say that “wisdom” (σοφία) is from God and is ultimately Christ as the fulfillment of Proverbs and all Old Testament understandings of wisdom. For more on wisdom in Paul, especially 1 Cor, see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 193.

righteousness has become an effective reality.<sup>167</sup> This righteousness is not the Corinthians' work, but the work of God and clearly has a declarative nature.<sup>168</sup>

God's righteousness in Christ for the Corinthians and his holiness in Christ are very similar. As mentioned previously concerning 1 Corinthians 1:2, the holiness language used to describe the reality that comes by being "in Christ" shows that God owns the Corinthian believers. God has brought them near to himself and, in a similar way that he purified a temple, his people, vessels, etc. with his presence, so he establishes the "set apart" nature of the Corinthian believers "in Christ." Both the righteousness and the holiness of the Corinthian believers find their place *in Christ* instead of in *themselves*.

In a summary of these two joined realities in Christ Thiselton says,

Thus the "reversal" through the cross of lack of status and self-esteem, whether in a shame-culture context or a guilt context finds expression in being clothed in the righteousness of Christ as divinely loved and accepted, and in being purified and set apart as one invited to the privileged place of intimacy with God, marked and identified by his name through Christ.<sup>169</sup>

The wise man should not boast in his wisdom, according to Jeremiah 9:23 (the background for 1 Cor 1:31). Paul has been very careful to articulate his apostleship, the calling of the Corinthian believers, the message of the cross, and the wisdom of God (and all the salvation realities that go along with it) as realities that are *not* based on human wisdom or ability. The *reason* for him arguing this way is very important for understanding the nature of sanctification in 1 Corinthians, especially the first chapter. His reason is simple and based on Old Testament Scripture: to *exclude* all boasting by believers (or anyone else) in God's presence. Paul wishes to destroy any grounds for and origin of holiness in the Corinthians *in and of themselves*. Ontologically and ethically speaking (i.e., in their being and in their behavior), the Corinthian church was fleshly/worldly (1 Cor

---

<sup>167</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 193.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 193-94.

3:1ff.). In Christ, however, they could boast in the righteousness and holiness that belonged to them because Christ was those things for them. They could boast, but *only* in the Lord.<sup>170</sup> Their holiness was only in union with Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul makes a transition: He goes from exhorting the fleshly Corinthian believers to “not be deceived” to reminding them of what they are in Christ. There were several types of people who would not be inheriting the kingdom of God. Paul’s warning implies that many of the Corinthian believers were indeed deceived into thinking they could be both God’s people and people who lived unrighteous lifestyles (vv. 9-10). The Corinthian believers may have been *practicing* unrighteous behavior, but Paul is still convinced they are something *different* than their behavior showed because of Christ. Paul says, “And such *were* some of you” (καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε) (v. 11a). Though not *all* of the Corinthian church was necessarily fornicators and idol worshippers, many certainly had that background.<sup>171</sup> Paul is not condemning them, but reminding them of who they *used to be before Christ* and, it is implied, how they were changed after coming to know Christ.<sup>172</sup>

The next three verbs (ἀπελούσασθε, ἡγιάσθητε, and ἐδικαιώθητε) are preceded with the contrastive “but” (ἀλλὰ) to emphasize how different Paul knows the Corinthian believers are in Christ. Though it sounds odd to give a literal translation in English, the Greek structure, filled with contrasts for emphasis, makes Paul’s point very clear: the Corinthian believers are not acting in a way that shows who they are in Christ. Though

---

<sup>170</sup>Ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω prohibits pride by excluding all other types of boasting/worship, which is in contrast to the idol-worshipping practices of the Corinthians.

<sup>171</sup>Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 141.

<sup>172</sup>The continuous imperfect indicative of the form of the verb “used to be,” along with the neuter plural demonstrative pronoun (ταῦτά) underlies Paul’s shock at the fact that what the Corinthians are *now that they know Christ*, is conflicting with their current practices. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 453.

the first verb is middle voice and the second two are passive, it makes the most sense to take the first verb as a middle of personal interest that functions in a way very similar to a passive voice.<sup>173</sup> The context helps make the tense clearer because Paul emphasizes the fact that realities have already come into play for the Corinthian believers that should have impacted their behavior.

Paul first says the Corinthian believers “were washed,” which carries the idea of the initial act of baptism and the starting point (i.e., initiation) into Christian faith. Being “washed” is more than just a “daily” type of spiritual cleansing that has to be repeated on a regular basis. Thiselton explains, “It is a *wiping clean of the slate one-for-all* which is associated (as here) with justification by grace which is independent of renewed pardon.”<sup>174</sup> The finality of the act corresponds to what Christ has done on the cross for the Corinthian church. He has died and was raised once. So, the washing that cleansed the slate of sin for the Corinthians is also sufficient since it happened through the resurrected Lord.

Paul goes on to say that the Corinthians “were sanctified” and “were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ). The word for “sanctified” has the same meaning as 1:2, 30. God set them apart as his special possession. The passive tense of the verb reinforces this concept and reminds the Corinthian believers that they do not belong to themselves, so they are deceiving themselves if they think they can get away with fornicating for long. The use of “the name of the Lord Jesus” reminds the Corinthian believers again of how they identify with Christ. They are incorporated into “one body and one Spirit” (6:17-19).<sup>175</sup> The “right standing” the Corinthian believers enjoy with God is something that cannot be revoked. Believers are righteous and holy

---

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., 454.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 455.

“in the spirit” (ἐν τῷ πνεύματι).<sup>176</sup> The Spirit of God is the instrument by which the Corinthian believers actually have their standing with God in Christ.

Though there are certainly implications for living that corresponds to their standing, the Corinthian believers are still reminded of their connection with Christ and the existence of holiness *outside* of themselves in Christ. Paul hopes to motivate the Corinthians by reminding them of the status they *already have* in Christ Jesus through the Spirit of God. The Corinthian believers do not find holiness in their own being, but by remembering that they are to be in Christ and who he is for them so that God will be glorified. They cannot boast in their own righteousness or holiness. They can only boast in the resurrected Christ of God and the gospel that comes from being in relationship with him. Seifrid summarizes,

Believers *are* “in Christ Jesus,” and he *is* to them righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). The Corinthians *were* immoral, greedy and idolatrous persons, but have been washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:11). Christ was made *to be* sin, in order that those who believe might *be* the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). These ontological statements correspond to the extrinsic character of righteousness and justification which we have seen already. The new creation and its righteousness have come to reality in the resurrected Christ.<sup>177</sup>

### **Being Made Holy through the Word: Ephesians 5:26**

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian church, unites all things in heaven and earth to Christ (Eph 1:10).<sup>178</sup> Union with Christ is central to his theology and his exhortations to the Ephesians. Christ is the one in whom believers have been blessed and it is *only*

---

<sup>176</sup>Taking ἐν as a preposition of instrument. Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>177</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 88.

<sup>178</sup>Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 58. O’Brien argues for cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ as the central message of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. He also argues that Paul, in unifying all things in some way in Christ, uses “in Christ” to mean God’s purposes come together in the “sphere” of Christ. Christ is not simply the *instrument* by which God sums up the universe, but rather the *sphere* in which God brings about a new creation through a new unity (more in line with Eph 1:3-7, 9). *Ibid.*, 59.

because of their status of being “in Christ” (v. 3) that they have “every spiritual blessing.” Believers are chosen in Christ for a purpose. The purpose for this election is so that the Ephesians will become “holy and blameless” (εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους). The Ephesian church is the product of something much greater than they are. In verses 9-10 Paul shows,

The mystery which God has graciously made known refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe in Christ as the focal point. All things are to be summed up in God’s anointed one and presented as a coherent totality in him.<sup>179</sup>

Paul deals with the unity created in a new humanity by God through and in Christ for the first part of his letter (1:3-3:21); he then shifts to *how* the new humanity functions in earthly life in the latter half of his letter (4:1-6:20).<sup>180</sup> In the latter half of his letter, Paul uses a powerful illustration that both instructs his readers in how they should live and gives a well-known analogy that points to deeper spiritual truths concerning Christ’s relationship to his church. The illustration is that of marital union and how the husband and wife should treat one another.

In verse 26, Paul says that there are three purposes (set out in three purpose clauses) for Christ giving his life<sup>181</sup> for his church (cf. v. 25): (1) to “sanctify her,” (2) to “present her to himself” in splendor, and (3) so that he might enable her to be “holy and blameless.”<sup>182</sup> Ezekiel 16:1-14 most likely stands in the background to Ephesians 5:26-27. God’s relationship with Israel in Ezekiel 16:9 is analogous to his relationship with the

---

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 271.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 419. The focus of the verb and the reflexive pronoun seen in “gave himself over for her” (παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς) shows that “Christ took the initiative in handing himself over to death (5:1, 2).” Ibid., 419-20.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 420. The Greek phrases, ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ, ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ, and ἵνα ἡγιασὴ καὶ ἀμώμος are three purposes and are all joined together to show that Christ’s sacrifice created something that *would* come to pass because believers were in union with Christ in a similar way that a husband is in union with his wife.

church. God entered a covenant with Israel (Ezek 16:8) and then proceeds to wash his bride and anoint her with oil. God cleanses Israel, his wife, of the filth of the land of the Canaanites (Ezek 16:3ff.). The “cleansing” comes as a result of the covenant that God enters with Israel. God had called Israel “mine” (Ezek 16:8). In Ephesians 5:25, Christ already loved the church. He loved the church so much that he gave his life for it. Christ now belongs to the church as much as the church belongs to him. The two are united together. Christ gives his life to make the church holy. The concept of holiness in this verb has the idea of “setting someone apart to God for his service.”<sup>183</sup> First, God separates the church for himself. O’Brien says, “V. 26 stresses the corporate dimension by asserting that it is the *church* (note the emphatic position of ‘it’) which is sanctified through Christ’s death.”<sup>184</sup> The church has been brought into an exclusive relationship with Christ, just as a man is to show love to his wife in an exclusive, special way, so Christ’s love for his church is not predicated on the necessity of first cleansing her of moral filth.<sup>185</sup> While the act of sanctifying the church is one of God’s devotion (i.e., God’s devoting the church to himself for his purpose), the closely related work of “cleansing” has a slightly different idea.

The “cleansing” of the church, made possible by Christ giving his life for the church, accompanies the reality of “holiness” the church experiences.<sup>186</sup> The aorist participle referring to the church’s cleansing and the aorist subjunctive referring to the church’s holiness do not denote temporal realities that rely on one of the other to take place first, but should best be understood as “denoting the means by which the action of

---

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 421.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Cf. Ezek 16:1-9. God showed love to Israel through his covenant bond with her first, and *then* he cleaned her up.

<sup>186</sup>O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 422. For more information on the verbal struggles with this passage, see *ibid.*, 422, 422nn8-50.

the main verb was accomplished.”<sup>187</sup> In other words, Christ makes his bride, the church, holy *by* cleaning her. Sin must be removed before true holiness can take place for the church. Christ cannot wed himself to something that is impure. The “word” is the means by which Christ washes the church (Cf. Titus 3:5). Since Ezekiel 16 is most likely the background and primary Old Testament background source for this passage, the “washing” is not baptism and the “word” is not some confession that is joined with the baptism. The bridal bath of Jewish marital customs is probably what Paul has in mind with the picture of Christ’s “washing” of the church. The “word” is probably a summary of the “word of the gospel.”<sup>188</sup> The spiritual cleansing takes place through God’s gospel in Christ. The gospel is the *means* by which the cleansing and the holiness are accomplished. The word of God’s gospel through Christ brings the message of Christ’s sacrificial gift of his life for his bride, the church. The purpose of Christ’s sacrificial death is not only to make the church his own possession, but to secure the holiness and cleansing of the church as well. Being in union with Christ means being holy and clean because of what he has done and appropriated through the message of his sacrifice and resurrection. All of Christ’s spiritual blessings are given in a very special and exclusive way to his bride, the church. O’Brien summarizes what Paul says about holiness and cleansing through the Word:

The apostle asserts that the church is made pure by a spiritual cleansing (“by the washing of water”), and this is accomplished through the purifying word of the gospel—a notion that is akin to our Lord’s words about his disciples being *cleansed* and *sanctified* through the word which he had spoken (John 15:3; 17:7).<sup>189</sup>

In verse 27, Paul says Christ has a purpose for his sanctifying and purifying works: “so that he might present the church to himself in splendor” (*ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς*

---

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid. Cf. Eph 6:17; Rom 10:8, 17; Heb 6:5; 1 Pet 1:25). This reading and understanding of “word” is most consistent with Paul’s usage throughout his letters (with the exception of 2 Cor 13:1).

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 423.

ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν). Christ sanctifies and purifies his bride for a reason. Since the church, in a similar way to Israel in Ezekiel 16, represents God and reflects his reputation to the watching world, so the church reflects the love and power of Christ to the world. Christ will now present the church *to himself* and *by himself*. Christ has done everything to bring his bride to this goal. By adding the personal pronoun (he, αὐτὸς) to the reflexive pronoun (himself, ἑαυτῷ) Paul emphasizes the fact that Christ *himself* brings his own goal to pass in the final days in glory.<sup>190</sup> Paul, the Ephesian church, nor anything else can take credit for this grand accomplishment (cf. 1 Cor 1:31). Christ will have his bride “holy and blameless” (ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος). Just as God’s election of believers was for the purpose of having them be “holy and blameless” (1:4), so Christ’s church must be. Moral and spiritual beauty take place for the church by the word of Christ joining the church to its leader (i.e., “head,” cf. 5:25). Moral holiness will be evident, but that is not Paul’s focus in this passage. Union with Christ brings the bride of Christ to a holy and blameless standing for the whole world to see. This union works powerfully to bring Christ’s bride into moral conformity to the holy status they enjoy. The church’s behavior should reflect the standing the church has in Christ. One day, the church *will reflect holiness and purity* when Christ presents his bride in all of its beauty to the Father in heaven, “without spot or wrinkle” (v. 27). This time is future, but does not mean Paul leaves no room for moral progress in holiness. It only means Paul’s focus is on the work of Christ *for believers*, not their ability to conform to holy behavior. Since believers will one day be perfect in moral character, it stands to reason that reflection on Christ and his holy union with the church will inevitably produce fruit (Cf. John 15:1-5).

### **A Summary of Pauline Sanctification**

The primary usage of holiness language in Paul’s writings denotes God’s

---

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., 424.

dedicating and appropriating the church to himself through election in Christ. The church is sanctified *in Christ*. Ridderbos calls this special place of privilege the “redemptive-indicative.”<sup>191</sup> Holiness language in Paul’s letters “does not in the first instance have a moral content”<sup>192</sup>:

It is rather, as is evident in particular against the Old Testament background, a general qualification of the people of God, also employed originally in close connection with the cultus. As chosen by God out of all the peoples and placed on his side, Israel is holy (Exo 19:5, 6). Paul, too, starts from this holiness (Rom 11:16), and transfers it to the New Testament church. Its holiness is situated above all in that it has been sanctified in Christ. He has, as a man his wife, appropriated the church to himself, made it his possession (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11).<sup>193</sup>

Moral holiness is more described than defined in Paul’s letters. Paul calls believers to remember what they are *in Christ*. Paul does not focus on *moral activity*, but rather on the nature of the new spiritual condition in which believers find themselves. Paul focuses on objective realities that have now come to pass in the new age in Christ.<sup>194</sup>

True freedom is the right and, in some sense, the responsibility of those who are righteous and holy in Christ. Though the gift of God to believers is free, it is certainly not cheap (or easy). There is a constant cycle of “presenting” that goes on through Romans 6. Death has no power over those who have died to death and sin (Rom 6:9). This new era of freedom, life, righteousness, obedience, and holiness is summarized in the death of Christ and the baptism of believers. Baptism is the external sign that shows a type of exchange. The old masters of death, sin, wicked desires, and impurities release their hold on believers so that the power of the old age no longer has a claim on those who have died with Christ. These new citizens of a new obedience have a journey before them. They must exhibit service to a new master. Unfortunately, that does not mean their old masters

---

<sup>191</sup>Ridderbos, *Paul*, 261.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., 263.

will cease in their pursuit of afflicting believers. Believers are still in the tension of two rules as it regards experience and needing various means of grace to help them hold to the promise of the one of who actually rules them.

There are even times when, like the Corinthians, believers may fall into grievous sin and exhibit worldly behavior. The way to go forward in exhibiting holiness is *not* through simply getting believers to focus more on being holy themselves, but rather by reminding them through Scripture, other believers, and especially the promptings of the Holy Spirit, to focus on what it means to be *in Christ*. Paul reminded believers of what they once were (1 Cor 6:11) and criticized behavior that reflected unholy people. He did say to stop the behavior, but warned them that such behavior was not characteristic of God's holy ones (1 Cor 6:1-10). Paul's method to the Corinthians to provoke them to remember their holiness in his first letter is still valid for believers today. As believers dwell on their holy standing in Christ and remember that they are God's holy possession through the sacrifice of their Savior, then they are empowered to use all the resources God has put at their disposal for his glory. The focus must be on *Christ*, not moral improvement. Moral improvement should be expected without trying to project the holy status of believers according to their behavior. Ethical progress can then be expected and encouraged without threatening the actual objective holy standing believers have in Christ. Ethical progress will take place as believers remember their justification and sanctification because of Christ. Love for Christ will create obedience as it comes from the power of God's justifying and sanctifying gospel in Christ through the word of his gospel. Since Christ will one day present his church as holy, believers must presently dedicate themselves to service for God that reflects the holy status they have in Christ. Moral perfection will only be achieved in glory in heaven. Union with Christ overcomes the vestiges of the flesh that remain from the old age of sinful humanity in glory. The last remnants of the flesh will be gone and the bride of Christ will stand in all its beauty in the presence of Christ (Eph 5:27).

### **The Nature of Progress in Sanctification in Hebrews**

Jesus Christ is better: this message is at the heart of Hebrews. Jesus, as God's son, is the one God has chosen to speak through and is the one who is the "heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). He is the one through whom God created the universe and he is the one who displays the "radiance of the glory of God" (Heb 1:3). Jesus is better. He is better than all the shadows of the Old Testament. He is better than the angels (Heb 1-2). He gives a better rest than the Sabbath (Heb 3-4). He is a better priest (Heb 4-7). Christ brings a better covenant (Heb 8-9), which brings with it a better worship. Most important to this discussion, he gives a better offering as high priest of God by giving the perfect sacrifice: himself. Christ's perfect sacrifice brings with it a perfect holiness for believers. In keeping with the "better" comparison throughout Hebrews, the believers' holiness does not exist because of priests and offerings that were shadows and inferior to God himself, but rather this *better* holiness comes from a perfect priest and sacrifice, God's own son. The context of the language of holiness in Hebrews is that of the perfect and greatly anticipated ritual sacrifice of Christ, who is the "good thing to come" and the "true reality" that the law of the Old Testament could only anticipate (Heb 10:1). In Hebrews 10:10, 14; 12:10, 14, Christ's better sacrifice lays the foundation for God to instruct his spiritual children through discipline so that they may share his holiness, with which they are able to see the Lord in heaven.

#### **Sanctifying Believers through Christ's Sacrifice: Hebrews 10:10, 14**

The author to the Hebrews concludes his thoughts on the law and God's will for Christ (from the background of Psalm 40) in verse 10. He also "broadens the scope by referring to the important motif of sanctification, mentioning for the first time the full name *Jesus Christ*, and by speaking of his *once-for-all* sacrifice that has lasting effects."<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 353.

The opening words of the final parts of this paragraph are significant.<sup>196</sup> The “will of God” is both the will of Christ and of God. Attridge says, “This divine will is not something extrinsic to Christ’s sacrificial act. By his ready obedience he has made that will his own.”<sup>197</sup> Christ offers his body once for all. This offering is obviously in reference to his sacrifice in death.<sup>198</sup> Christ’s sacrifice fulfills God’s will and achieves another goal at the same time. This goal is a part of God’s saving will: to achieve the sanctification of his people.<sup>199</sup>

Believers and the author of the epistle “have been sanctified” (ἡγιασμένοι)<sup>200</sup> through Christ’s death. O’Brien explains, “This is a reference to a definitive sanctification, and it anticipates the description in v. 14 of the new people of God who have been radically transformed and consecrated to his service.”<sup>201</sup> The “through offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) shows the means by which the sanctified have their special position in Christ. His sacrifice, which is *unique*, makes them uniquely able to share in his holiness.<sup>202</sup> This sacrifice is unrepeatable. It is “once-for-all” (ἐφάπαξ) and creates a sanctification that is unique. Christ will not sacrifice himself. It is unnecessary. Believers do not need to *do* anything special to be

---

<sup>196</sup>The Greek phrase, ἐν ᾧ θελήματι, demonstrates the unique *purpose* and *commitment* of Christ to be obedient to God through his submission to death on the cross.

<sup>197</sup>Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 276.

<sup>198</sup>David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews’*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 148.

<sup>199</sup>O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 353.

<sup>200</sup>The author includes himself in this verse (2nd person plural). There is a confessional element to this passage. Ibid.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 354.

considered holy. It has been done already. O'Brien says, "And if his sacrifice is unrepeatable, then so too is the definitive sanctification by which it is effected."<sup>203</sup> Christ has fulfilled the shadows and types of the Old Testament. The roles of high priest and sacrifice find their "ultimate intention" in Christ and his work.<sup>204</sup>

In verse 14, the same "single offering" (cf. vv. 10-13) is the means by which believers are "perfected" (τετελείωκεν).<sup>205</sup> No complete offering was possible in the Levitical priesthood (7:11) or the law and its rules for sacrifices (7:19; 9:9; 10:1).<sup>206</sup> The perfect tense of the verb "perfected" shows the prominence of Christ's work. The temporal phrase, "for all time" (εις τὸ διηνεκές), emphasizes the longevity and the result/effects of Christ's work for believers. The definitive realities of perfection and holiness are located in the past act of Christ's sacrifice. These realities take place in Christ's unique death for believers, the sanctified. Believers are "those who have been sanctified" (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους) and, instead of taking the "present passive participle as a remark about the ongoing process of sanctification for the believer," it makes better sense to see the cultic aspects of holiness that are throughout this section.<sup>207</sup> Since Christ's new covenant brings a better form of worship through his better offering/sacrifice, it makes sense that believers would have a different kind of holiness since they have a holy standing that has been "effected by the blood of Christ."<sup>208</sup> Christ's sacrifice brings a definitive position of

---

<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

<sup>204</sup>George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 978.

<sup>205</sup>The indicative perfect active verb shows how something has been done in the past and now continues to have results. The completion of believers involves holiness.

<sup>206</sup>O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 356.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., 357. Cf. Heb 2:11; 9:13-14; 10:10, 29; 13:12.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid.

holiness that continually rests on the work of Christ and what he has done as a better priest and sacrifice.

**Striving for Holiness Demonstrates  
God's Holiness: Hebrew 12:10, 14**

God works on believers throughout their lives. They are his children. God treats them as “sons” (Heb 12:7). Just as children need discipline from their parents, so also do believers need discipline from God, who is their father. Even good parents discipline their children for a time, even though it is unpleasant (vv. 9-10a). God’s discipline is unique, just like Christ’s sacrifice is unique. God’s discipline actually allows believers “to share in his holiness” (εἰς τὸ μεταλαβεῖν τῆς ἁγιότητος αὐτοῦ). O’Brien notes, “The rare term for ‘holiness’ used here points to God’s holy character, that holiness which is an essential attribute of God himself (see 2 Cor 1:12).”<sup>209</sup> Apart from sharing in the discipline (which assumes some suffering on the part of believers), there is no holiness for believers. God’s character cannot be manifested in the lives of believers without discipline. Believers know they are holy in Christ (Heb 10:10, 14), but they feel that they are holy through suffering. Christ had to suffer for them and now they will suffer for him. Their suffering is part of the incarnational manifestation of God’s holiness in Christ through them. This holiness is a goal for God’s people. His people have holiness in Christ, but do not perfectly manifest holiness until what is called “entire sanctification” takes place in heaven. There is a present anticipation for the future perfection of saints that comes with gifts of holiness breaking through in the lives of believers through suffering.<sup>210</sup> The suffering of discipline allows believers to experience what Christ experienced. Just as Christ could endure the cross because of the joy set before him by God (Heb 12:1-2), so believers are able to endure discipline. Believers must be an example of Christ for the

---

<sup>209</sup>Ibid., 468.

<sup>210</sup>Ibid., 468-69.

holiness of God to be seen in the world. Only by “considering” Christ and how he endured (12:3) will believers show holiness. Even then, it may be argued from this background, it is Christ who shows up in the lives of believers.

Union with Christ in suffering is manifested in the holy conduct of believers as they “strive” for peace and holiness (12:14). In verse 14, believers are told by the author to “strive” (διώκετε) for peace and holiness. The verb is particularly urgent because the need is urgent. The imperative present active verb is much stronger than other verbs used to encourage believers to action. Surprisingly, believers are told to pursue peace and holiness, things they already have as divine gifts and objective realities through the gospel.<sup>211</sup> How does a believer pursue something that has already been given to them? From looking at the context of this exhortation, it is obvious that drooping knees and weak hands (references to Isa 35:3-4 and Prov 4:26) have to be overcome before believers can “strive” for holiness and peace. Pursuit of holiness comes through that author’s reminder in 12:3 to “consider him,” which means Christ must be viewed as the example for being able to endure suffering. Believers must pursue holiness by *looking back* at Christ and his perseverance and then they must *look forward* to seeing the Lord in heaven at the end of their life. They are not dead yet. Their race is not over (12:4). The example of Christ on the cross must reign supreme in the minds of believers so that they will then reflect the peace they have with God and the holiness they share with God in concrete ways. It is not through *moral pursuits* that holiness, a gift and status believers already enjoy, should be pursued. Rather, believers should pray for the strength to endure the race for the glory set before them in the *parousia*. Ultimately, it is the resurrection hope that believers should anticipate to give them hope to endure (cf. 1 Cor 15). The death of Christ and the longing to see him face to face should serve as holiness “book ends” for believers. Believers look back and forward in order to find grace for their present situations. They should pray for

---

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., 472.

perseverance as they suffer for holding on to the grace of God (v. 15). Concretely, pursuit of holiness means not being sexually immoral and not allowing bitterness to creep into believers' hearts (contra Esau in vv. 15-16). Practical holiness does not encompass just these two avoidances of sin, but rather involves a daily pursuit of God in Christ, which involves suffering for the truth of Christ and pursuing peace with others (v. 14a), especially other believers.

### **The Nature of Progress in Sanctification in John and 1 Peter**

Though scholars do not give as much attention to John and 1 Peter, they still offer important and complementary contributions to the New Testament discussion on holiness. John, in a similar fashion as the letter to the Ephesians, emphasizes the importance of holiness and the word. First Peter focuses on the Old Testament background and holiness categories of Leviticus. First Peter and the letter to the Hebrews have a lot in common as they both explicitly deal with believers needing to *do* something about their holiness because of the fact that God himself has a holy character. Since they both share a concern for holiness language and themes from the book of Leviticus, this should come as no surprise. These New Testament books come to similar conclusions about holiness.

### **The Word Makes Believers Holy in Christ: John 17:17-19**

Jesus Christ prayed for his people. In the middle of his preparation to suffer on the cross for sinners, Jesus was praying for those whom God had given him out of the sinful world (17:6, 9). Jesus prays for his followers in a unique way (it is not “for the world,” v. 9). These followers have kept God’s word that was passed on to them though Jesus (vv. 6, 8). God’s word, the message about Christ being the one sent from God for them, is the truth (v. 8). Jesus is praying for them because they are still in the world and will be subject to all the sufferings of the world because they belong to him (vv. 11, 14). The evil one is still in the world and hates them (v. 15). They are not of the world and

will be hated by the world (v. 14). They need to have Jesus' joy "fulfilled in them" (v. 13; cf. Heb 12:2). They need to persevere in their faith and in obedience, so Christ is praying that they will do exactly that. He is not praying for their physical well-being as much as their perseverance in faith.<sup>212</sup> It is from within this context that Jesus prays for the sanctification of those God has given him.

Christ prays that God would "sanctify" (δῶκετε) his followers. The holiness word-group is limited in John (the verb found in 10:36; 17:17, 19 and the adjective found in 1:33; 6:69; 14:26; 17:11; 20:22). Its basic level of meaning is that God himself is transcendent, other, distinct, and separate from his creation.<sup>213</sup> Anything that is "reserved" for him also derives its holiness from him.<sup>214</sup> In some sense, God alone is holy. The only way to participate in holiness is to derive it from God himself. Holiness can be reserved for the altar in the temple, the prophet Jeremiah, and the priest, Aaron. All of these objects/people were holy in some sense in the Old Testament.<sup>215</sup> Moral "overtones" come from the word holy because "ideally if someone is set apart for God and God's purposes alone, that person will do only what God wants, and hate all that God hates."<sup>216</sup> Christ has been "set apart" by God for a purpose in the world (10:36). Christ has also "consecrated himself" (ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν) (v. 19a) for the purpose of sanctifying his followers in the truth (v. 19b). The followers of Christ are holy so that they can perform God's mission on behalf of Christ. Believers are to live the truth of Christ as evidence of their having been sanctified by the Father. Believers are holy because of the word of truth (ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν). Carson writes,

---

<sup>212</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 564.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid., 565.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid.

This can only mean that the means Jesus expects his Father to use as he sanctifies his Son's followers is *the truth*. The Father will immerse Jesus' followers in the revelation of himself in his Son; he will sanctify them by sending the Paraclete to guide them into all truth (15:13). Jesus' followers will be 'set apart' from the world, reserved for God's service, insofar as they think and live in conformity with the truth, the 'word' of revelation (v. 6) supremely mediated through Christ (himself the truth, 14:6, and the Word incarnate, 1:1, 14)—the revelation now embodied in the pages of this book.<sup>217</sup>

The truth of Christ is where Christ's followers find their holiness. *In* Christ's truth (i.e., the gospel word about Christ) believers are set apart for going into the world as Christ was sent into the world by God (v. 18). Christ sets himself apart so that believers may also be set apart. Believers are holy so they can show Christ (i.e., so they can accomplish their mission), who is glorified through them (v. 10).

#### **Holy Pursuits Come from the Holiness of God: 1 Peter 1:15-16**

First Peter is a book about suffering. The readers of the letter were obviously facing suffering and persecution for their faith (1:6-7; 2:18-20; 3:1, 13-17; 4:1-4, 12-19; 5:10).<sup>218</sup> Suffering is the larger context of the book of 1 Peter, but preparation for action is the immediate context for verses 15-16. Peter is still a man of action, just as he was in the gospels. Peter encourages the believers to whom he writes to set their hopes fully on the grace that will come in the future when Christ is revealed (v. 13). Peter looks to the future *parousia* to ground believers hope. In similar fashion to Paul, he also encourages them to be like obedient children and *not* be conformed to the desires they had as unbelievers (v. 14).<sup>219</sup>

Instead of obeying evil desires as they used to do, Peter encourages the

---

<sup>217</sup>Ibid., 566.

<sup>218</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 38.

<sup>219</sup>Here, Peter and Paul have a similar method for encouraging believers to be holy in their behavior: by reminding believers of what they used to be before being in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 6:11).

recipients of his letter to base their conduct on the holy character of God. He tells them to remember their calling by a holy God.<sup>220</sup> The “calling” here “refers to God’s effectual call in which he infallibly brings people to himself (1 Pet 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10).”<sup>221</sup> Grace must precede demand. Peter is not telling the believers to do something that they can achieve through their own meager means and strength. Instead, he is reminding them of the holiness that “stems from the God who called them into the sphere of the holy.”<sup>222</sup> God’s people are to live differently. They are pilgrims in this world and should not allow their actions to be conformed to its ways (1:1; 2:11). The background for this idea of holy living is probably Leviticus 18:2-4.<sup>223</sup> As Israel was to avoid the evil behavior of the cultures surrounding it, so believers should do the same, even though the believers who were being addressed by Peter were scattered and under persecution. The grounding (“for” in NIV, *διότι*) of the holy behavior is found in an Old Testament concept rather than one particular verse. Several verses could qualify as the “quoted passage” (e.g., Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26), but the *idea* is throughout the book of Leviticus. Peter picks up on this theme and applies it to the believers that are spread out over Asia Minor.<sup>224</sup> God himself needs to be the model for holy living that Peter is calling for among believers. What does that holy living *look like*? Peter goes on to say that the “precious blood of Christ” ransomed his audience (vv. 18-19). Christ’s death and resurrection are the basis for their hope (v. 21a). Peter bases his understanding on holy living, not on how they used to be,

---

<sup>220</sup>The Greek phrase, ἀλλὰ ἡ κατὰ τὸν καλέσαντα ὑμᾶς ἅγιον, shows the nature and character of their calling. Their demonstration of holiness comes for the empowering of God’s holy and powerful (i.e., sovereign) calling.

<sup>221</sup>Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 80.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid. Schreiner takes καλέσαντα as an attributive participle and ἅγιον as a substantive noun. Ibid.

<sup>223</sup>Ibid.

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

but on who they are now in Christ (v. 21b). Believers need to take action “with respect/fear” toward God for ransoming them (v. 17). They need to call out to him (showing their dependence on him). Holy living is synonymous with hoping in Christ’s death and resurrection in such a way that they do not hope in what they used to. Trusting in Christ needs to characterize their lifestyles. Peter does not focus on believers doing several specific *moral activities* so that they can be holy, but rather encourages them to love one another because their souls have been purified (v. 22) because they are already “called” holy (v. 16). Believers *will* be holy because God is holy. This phrase is, in some sense, a promise as well as an implied command.<sup>225</sup>

### **Conclusion of New Testament Texts**

The holiness language of the New Testament focuses on the fact that believers are devoted to God by being *in* Christ. In Romans, sanctification comes as a result of being a slave of righteousness. In 1 Corinthians, holiness is found in what Christ is for the Corinthian believers. They are holy because Christ is holy. Paul implies that a holy status in Christ should be reflected in holy behavior. In both 1 Corinthians and Romans sanctification is closely connected to God’s declarative act of justification (Rom 6:19; 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11). Both justification and sanctification take place for believers in Christ. In Ephesians, Paul uses the illustration of marital union to describe how Christ has given himself for the church and makes the church holy through his cleansing word. Believers are holy through union with Christ in his death and through the word of the gospel making them holy. In John, Christ consecrates himself so that his disciples may be holy through the truth of hearing and believing God’s word (John 17:17, 19). God’s word is

---

<sup>225</sup>“You yourselves will be holy” (Ἄγιοι ἑσσεσθε) shows how the future middle deponent carries the force of a command, but the context shows that, unlike unfaithful Israel, believers under the new covenant will actually *obey* the words of God because the word of God made them “born again” (vv. 23-25).

truth and that truth, found in Christ and his fulfillment of God's plan to save sinners, makes Christ's followers holy.

Christ is the sacrifice that makes believers devoted to God and his sacrifice was the only, perfect offering that could complete God's work in making his people holy (Heb 10:10-14). God continues to make his people holy by disciplining them so that they may share in God's own personal holiness (Heb 12:10). Believers must strive for holiness so that they may see the Lord in heaven (Heb 12:14). Even though believers are already holy because Christ has made them so through his sacrifice, they must still seek practical ways to show how they are God's special possession, knowing that, as they pursue what they already have in Christ, in heaven they will experience the fullness of God's holiness in their lives.

God's holiness is the standard by which sinners will be measured. Believers have a derived holiness that exhibits itself in how they conduct themselves (1 Pet 1:15-16). Believers are holy in Christ and, through him, are perfect in their holiness. Although believers will not always be holy in their conduct, they still desire to show Christ in their lives by performing actions consistent with their standing in Christ because they know what they are *in him*.

What part does justification, union, law, and even their own nature play in the journey of believers growing in Christ? If there is progress in sanctification, will it look the same for every believer? Can believers be truly free to flourish in a holiness that takes hold of them and grows them while they are, at the same time, pursuing it? The next chapter explores the theological categories necessary to buttress the nature of progress in sanctification in Lutheran and Reformed theology. These two theological traditions will be synthesized to help articulate the nature of progress in sanctification that has been established through the exegesis of this chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### A GOSPEL-BASED APPROACH

#### Introduction

The gospel comes with its *own* obedience. In the gospel alone can believers find their source and strength for being holy. God alone is holy. John Webster summarizes the ultimate source of believers' holiness:

The sanctifying Spirit is *Lord*; that is, sanctification is not in any straightforward sense a process of cooperation or coordination between God and the creature, a drawing out or building upon some inherent holiness of the creature's own. Sanctification is *making* holy. Holiness is properly an incommunicable divine attribute; if creaturely realities become holy, it is by virtue of election, that is, by a sovereign act of segregation or separation by the Spirit as Lord. . . . From the vertical of 'lordship' there flows the horizontal of life which is truly *given*. Segregation, election to holiness, is not the abolition of creatureliness but its creation and preservation.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter offers a proposal of "gospel-based holiness" that explains the nature of progress in sanctification as the faith-union expression of justification that does not take place metaphysically in believers, but does take place ethically in their lives. Ethical progression is the supernatural result of being possessed by God and comes from experiencing the fruit of the Holy Spirit who works faith in the lives of believers. God owns believers through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Belonging to God makes believers holy and the faith that makes them holy also continues to pursue the holiness of God until glorification, when believers are completely cleansed of their sinful nature<sup>2</sup> and stand in Christ's holiness as no longer sinner and saint, but perfected saints.

---

<sup>1</sup>John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27.

<sup>2</sup>The term "sinful nature" is better than "sin nature" as proposed by John Walvoord in his Augustinian-Dispensational view of sanctification in John Walvoord, "Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley

The first part of this chapter gives a brief evaluation of both Lutheran and Reformed approaches to sanctification as they relate to the nature of progress. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the idea of synthesizing the contributions from both Reformed and Lutheran theology on sanctification. The rest of the chapter develops the synthesis of the second part of the chapter into a way of structuring and explaining the paradigm, experience, summary, contribution, and exhortation of “gospel-based holiness.”

### **Evaluation and Synthesis of Approaches**

Some may wonder what is “wrong” with the approaches of both Reformed and Lutheran sanctification. They both come from a more Augustinian background and have much in common.<sup>3</sup> Both views have a strong view of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Both views hold to an alien righteousness (justification) that comes to believers through faith. The problem comes when theologians come to distinguish between justification and sanctification. To phrase the question in a very simple way: What does sanctification have to do with justification? Although both Reformed and Lutheran views of sanctification have some form of “definitive” sanctification<sup>4</sup> based on Christ alone, both respective views disagree on the place of sanctification in theological

---

N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 199-226. See the reason given by Hoekema in his response to Walvoord. Anthony A. Hoekema, “Response to Walvoord,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 230-31.

<sup>3</sup>See the summary of Augustinian sanctification by Christopher James Bosson, “A Scriptural Appraisal of the Necessary Connection between Progressive Sanctification and Compatibilist Freedom” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 88-100. Also, see Horton’s comments on agreement within Reformed tradition and Lutheran confessions in Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim’s on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 649.

<sup>4</sup>“Definitive” simply means a positional aspect of sanctification that focuses on Christ as holy and the start of believers’ holiness irrespective of works. Holiness, in some sense, comes from Christ, not by works. John Murray has done much to help develop this “once-and-for-all” act of sanctification positions. See John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2, *The Claims of Truth* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 277-93.

connection to justification. There is confusion for many Christians in general over the theological conversation. Horton summarizes the problem well:

For many Christians, the change in subject from justification to sanctification roughly corresponds to God's work for us and our work for God, respectively. The result of this assumption, however, is that for a brief moment at the beginning of the Christian life the focus was on Christ and his blessing of justification that was received through faith alone—itsself, in fact, a gift of God. But then the rest of our life is a matter of striving for moral improvement.<sup>5</sup>

The Reformed view of sanctification<sup>6</sup> has many defining characteristics. Its proponents focus on the following: there are definitive aspects of holiness based on union with Christ, the law does not bring initial sanctification, the moral law<sup>7</sup> should be followed as part of the spiritual growth of believers' lives (empowered to do that law by the Holy Spirit because of love for God), and progressive sanctification takes place as believers experience a life formed by the law of God.<sup>8</sup> At the heart of this view held by Calvin and contemporary Reformed scholars is the need to sharply distinguish sanctification from justification and include the utility of the law of the Old Covenant as part of New Covenant believers' sanctification.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars think this focus on believers' ability to actually keep the moral law stems from the influence of varying theological traditions. Evidence of this need for modern progression, which some scholars see as the influence

---

<sup>5</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 650.

<sup>6</sup>The reformed view of sanctification would be, at its heart, represented by Calvin, but more modern scholars would be Sinclair Ferguson, Anthony Hoekema, and Robert Reymond. Though his personal position was not given an overview in chapter 3, Michael Horton would also fit within this theological tradition.

<sup>7</sup>See Calvin's explanation of how "even believers have need of the law" in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and indexed Ford Lewis Battles, reissued ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 1: 360ff. Calvin articulates his "third use of the law."

<sup>8</sup>See Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Reformed Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 85-88.

<sup>9</sup>This "law" would include what is sometimes called the "moral law" and views the demands of the Ten Commandments as the rule that is still necessary for believers to keep. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1: 367.

of American pietism and revivalism, exists in arguments from modern Reformed scholars. Dieter states in response to Hoekema's position on sanctification,

The sharp edges of the implications of classical Calvinism for the doctrine of sanctification seem to be significantly modified by the influence of American pietism and revivalism, both of which tend toward a more Arminian understanding of the nature of sanctification and human responsibility. Throughout the whole discussion, Hoekema reveals little of the pessimism for the human condition or for the prospects for practical sanctification that is inherent and often explicit in traditional Calvinism.<sup>10</sup>

There is not as much optimism for "law-keeping" in Horton's theology, being perhaps more focused than most Reformed theologians on definitive sanctification, but he still says, "Before we can speak of our being put to holy use and growing in grace, then, we must see that sanctification is first of all God's act of setting us apart from the world for himself."<sup>11</sup> For Horton and many Reformed theologians, believers cannot be "put to holy use" or "grow in grace" until talking about a *separate* act of God that sets believers apart from the world. Could it be possible the same act that sets believers apart could *also* be what grows them and simultaneously "puts them to holy use" if viewed from a different framework?<sup>12</sup>

The Reformed view of the nature of progress is bound up with the law and obedience to it. Little room is left for any other type of focus when talking about how a believer grows in holiness for Calvin and some of his successors. This ability to keep the law comes from the Spirit and does not ultimately grant justification, but sanctification

---

<sup>10</sup>Melvin E. Dieter, "Response to Hoekema," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 91.

<sup>11</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 651.

<sup>12</sup>Horton, unlike most Reformed theologians, focuses primarily on definitive sanctification and says very little about keeping the law. In fact, he says, "While our first impulse is to return to the law and self-effort in order to stem the tide of antinomianism, Paul and the Reformers call us back to the gospel, whose power in the face of continuing sin we have not sufficiently weighed." *Ibid.*, 656. Horton also quotes Luther and Lutheran scholars like Gerharde Forde extensively in his defense of progressive sanctification. It seems that he could be the most Lutheran Reformed scholar writing today if his sources and writings are any evidence. *Ibid.*, 656-57.

ultimately comes from what believers do as they are empowered by the Spirit. Still, Lutheran and Reformed positions on progress are still based on very similar foundations in Scripture.

The Lutheran position on sanctification is considered to be “whispered” in some theological circles.<sup>13</sup> This assertion is erroneous. Anyone can read Luther and see his concern for Christian living and growth.<sup>14</sup> The Lutheran position is clear on the “rejection of any concept of sanctification apart from justification.”<sup>15</sup> The gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone is very clear in Lutheran theology and preaching.<sup>16</sup>

These two positions can learn a lot from each other. Lutherans should always be mindful of neglecting sanctification and should be more willing to articulate holiness language and the nature of progress in a more transparent manner.<sup>17</sup> Most importantly,

---

<sup>13</sup>Carter Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1999): 4.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 2. Luther believed that daily growth was necessary so that Christian virtues would be obvious to the watching world. See Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms 1, Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick [CD-ROM] (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 12:328-29, 381.

<sup>15</sup>Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification,” 15.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Though Luther and Lutherans do not have a reputation for being “systematic” in their theological formulations, they should at least be organized and clear in their articulations of what they believe and what they think others should believe, especially if other theologians do not share the same theological tradition and assumptions. Meaningful dialogue can only come from respectfully acknowledging differing theological rubrics and assumptions. Both Lutheran and Reformed theologians acknowledge that Luther and Calvin had a different focus as it concerns “starting points” for theology. Luther argued that the only proper subject matter of theology is “man guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of man the sinner.” Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms 1*, 12:328. Bayer summarizes Luther’s view of justification concerning both its breadth and depth: “Justification is not a separate topic apart from which still other topics could be discussed. Justification is the starting point for all theology and it affects every other topic.” Oswald Bayer, “Justification as the Basis and Boundary of all Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 274. Justification is the Lutheran starting point, but anthropology helps shape this doctrine of justification. Justification starts with the fact that people are sinners. For this reason, Luther is said to start with man in his theology. Calvin started with the knowledge of God in his *Institutes*, specifically, a knowledge of God as the Creator. This knowledge comes through the revelation of God

the influence of union and redemptive-historical categories can be very helpful for Lutheran articulations of the nature of progress in doctrines of sanctification (and justification for that matter).

Reformed positions could learn a lot from their Lutheran friends as well. Some theologians could stand to value a clearer distinction between law and gospel as it concerns sanctification. They could also strive harder to avoid a subtle legalism that could easily arise if the law of the Old Covenant is given too much focus in the doctrine of sanctification. Some Reformed views of the nature of progressive sanctification could lead to too much introspection as it concerns Christian living instead of focusing on union with Christ. The spontaneity of faith-union sanctification should be celebrated as well. Reformers should rejoice in the spontaneity of good works that come from a fresh focusing on Christ and what he has done for them in his death and resurrection. Instead of focusing on the triumph of progress *itself*, they should rejoice that they still have a desire to repent daily from their sins and find themselves completely dependent on Christ, who has died and been raised for them.<sup>18</sup>

### **Theological Paradigm: Faith-Union and Justification**

At first glance, it might seem as though there is little room for synthesis of Luther's justification-centered understanding of theology and Calvin's "union-centered" theology, but in Luther's theology of justification and Calvin's theology of union, there is hope for a paradigm that combines the best qualities of both understandings of sanctification. Combining these two central theological paradigms creates a paradigm

---

to his creation through his word. In this sense, Calvin said to start with God in his discussion of theology. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:35.

<sup>18</sup>Mark Seifrid, "Luther, Melancthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husband and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 151-52.

that focuses on the nature of progress as “gospel-centered holiness.” The “faith-union” of Calvin applies the benefits of justification to believers and this same union works in them to grow them in faith. Justification comes from the Word of God creating faith in the souls God has chosen to save so that they are eternally united to him and then produce the ethical fruit of holiness that comes as a result of growing in a deeper relationship with Christ. As believers continue to repent of sin and have a deeper understanding of the power of the cross and the new creation made possible through it, then they show the passive fruit of holiness which is found in Christ alone. Believers work out their faith by coming back to the Word of God’s promise, which tells them all is well because they have been justified and set apart for Christ. God owns them, and believers no longer need to sin (though they still will because of their sinful nature left over from the “old man”). When they sin, they will still have the law convict the remnants of the old nature so that those who are both righteous and sinners will hold to their righteousness that exists outside of them and to the love of Christ. There is no fear of judgment though the sinful nature struggles as a defeated foe that will be permanently purged in heaven. Christ loves believers and his love, through the Word that works with the Holy Spirit to give faith, changes them in such a way that they will never be the same, but respond with that same love in joyful demonstrations of service to Christ and others. Believers supernaturally respond with love towards God and neighbor through acts of service as they continually submit themselves to their Lord and show ethical progress throughout their lives until they see Christ face to face (glorification). Before this “gospel-centered” view of the nature of progressive sanctification can be asserted, Luther and Calvin must, in some sense, come together and agree on some things. If modern-day Lutherans and Reformed theologians cannot agree upon this ecumenical holiness, then perhaps *some* progress can be made towards these views learning from one another in a spirit of Christian unity.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>The conclusions of this paper will not unite all Lutheran and Reformed theologians. It would be the epitome of arrogance to make such an assumption when

Luther and Calvin both believe in the importance of creation as part of their theology. Luther actually uses creation in his *Smaller Catechism* in relation to justification. The key phrase from the first article on creation where he references all God has done in creating and sustaining humanity is that “all this he does out of his pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on my part.”<sup>20</sup> Bayer notes,

As Luther was writing his Small Catechism, the word “merit” stood out in controversy over the doctrine of justification; the word “worthy” was significant in the controversy over the Sacrament. It is decisive for understanding justification that the language of justification is shifted into the arena of the article on creation. Conversely, it is decisive for understanding creation that the development of the doctrine of creation explicitly makes use of the language of justification.

By making this theological decision, Luther shows that the first article is, for him, not to be mistaken for an “exterior courtyard” of the Gentiles. The first article cannot be understood apart from faith in the triune God for it articulates the entire Trinitarian faith. Luther’s explanation points out with respect to what is most elementary in our lives what it means to be justified by faith alone in God’s Word. Faith is not something attached to the human person. My very being is faith, that is, my trusting that life and what is necessary for life is given to me. Waiting for the gift and reaching out toward it is faith. Faith, that is, my being, is nothing else than what is granted out of pure goodness and, in the face of life-threatening dangers, granted out of pure mercy.<sup>21</sup>

Just as God created humanity out of nothing and out of his pure grace, so God has justified sinful humanity (even more so) out of nothing (i.e., not based on any “merit” of their own) and believers have received God’s good gifts of creation and salvation.

Faith is something granted to believers through God’s Word. For Luther, “God’s Word is not merely information about God’s gracious disposition towards hearers of his Word.”<sup>22</sup>

---

these two groups have disagreed for so many years and still have many differences, many of which they cherish very highly. Hopefully, this position will lead to some development in conversation between theologians from both sides and agreement on some aspects of progression in sanctification, even if their agreement is that they disagree with this proposal of “gospel-centered holiness.”

<sup>20</sup>Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism*, ed. T. G. Tappert (St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1959), in Logos Library System [CD-ROM] (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000), 21.

<sup>21</sup>Bayer, “Justification as the Basis,” 275.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Kolb, “Contemporary Lutheran Understandings of the Doctrine of Justification: A Selective Glimpse,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

For Luther, faith was necessary to understand that everything in life, including justification, has been given. Just as creation was based on God's mercy, so is justification. With faith, believers are able to understand that creation and justification are granted irrespective of anything they can do. No one argues that creatures are passive in respect to God's Word making creation, so in the same way, God's Word continues to work in history as he makes believers from his Word.

Calvin believes justification to be "the main hinge on which religion turns."<sup>23</sup>

For Calvin, justification is understood "simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness."<sup>24</sup> Calvin adamantly disagreed with the Roman Catholics<sup>25</sup> of his day and, in response to their allegations that his teaching on justification promoted licentiousness, says, "For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them."<sup>26</sup> He defends justification by faith alone and, at the same time, defends his view of sanctification:

Why, then are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. For he 'is given unto us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption" [1 Cor. 1:30]. Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he

---

2004), 161. Kolb also mentions how Luther has a "strong doctrine of creation . . . and that he uses that Word in its various forms, oral, written, and sacramental." Kolb, *Justification*, 161. Though this chap. does not go into some of the sacramental problems with Luther's understanding of the "Word," some application is taken from helpful portions of his understanding towards the end of this chapter as it discusses preaching sanctification.

<sup>23</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and indexed Ford Lewis Battles, reissued ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2:726.

<sup>24</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:727.

<sup>25</sup>Calvin calls them "Papists." Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

illuminates by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies.

But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces [1 Cor 1:13]. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.<sup>27</sup>

Calvin believes both justification and sanctification are held “inseparably in himself” (1 Cor 1:30). Both of these doctrines are found in “union” with Christ. Faith is what creates and “bonds” believers to justification and sanctification. Calvin believes Christ holds these doctrines together in himself.<sup>28</sup> Calvin understands the rebirth believers have through their union with Christ to be the way God reforms his image.<sup>29</sup> He believes this rebirth takes time. He writes concerning his understanding of regeneration:

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 corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.<sup>30</sup>

Sin always remains in believers’ mortal bodies, but will be eradicated in heaven. The guilt of sin has been overcome by God in the lives of believers. The power (or “sway”) of sin is abolished by God over time. Calvin says, “Sin ceases only to reign; it does not cease to dwell in them. . . . [Some] vestiges remain; not to rule over them, but

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 798.

<sup>28</sup>It is important to note that there is a strong polemical notion to Calvin as he purposely defends his understanding of justification against Roman theologians. See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:797ff.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 2:601.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

to humble them by the consciousness of their own weakness.”<sup>31</sup> Even the remnants of the old sinful nature inherited from Adam serve a purpose in God’s plan for believers’ sanctification: humble dependence on God to continue to work in their lives to make them grow. There can be no “perfection” of sanctification in this life for believers.<sup>32</sup>

Luther also sees Christ and his work on the cross as central to the new life believers have in Christ. Luther says in part of his *Heidelberg Disputation* about the theology of the cross,

Indeed the law is holy [Rom. 7:12], every gift of God good [I Tim. 4:4], and everything that is created exceedingly good, as in Gen. 1[:31]. But, as stated above, he who has not been brought low, reduced to nothing through the cross and suffering, takes credit for works and wisdom and does not give credit to God. He thus misuses and defiles the gifts of God.

He, however, who has been emptied [cf. Phil. 2:7] through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether man does works or not, it is all the same to him. He neither boasts if he does good works, nor is he disturbed if God does not do good works through him. He knows that it is sufficient if he suffers and is brought low by the cross in order to be annihilated all the more. It is this that Christ says in John 3[:7], “You must be born anew.” To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man. To die, I say, means to feel death at hand.<sup>33</sup>

For Luther, justification must be central because Christ’s work on the cross is central. The cross brings low all the works of believers. Luther is no doubt alluding to Romans 6 when he speaks of how “one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man.”<sup>34</sup> This process is continual and takes place throughout the duration of believers’ lives. Suffering is at the heart of this continual dying.

This faith, itself a gift of God that believers receive passively, continues to work without the consent of believers’ rational abilities. Since sin taints even the mind of

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 603.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 602.

<sup>33</sup>Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation, Luther’s Works* [CD-ROM], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 31:55.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

believers, faith has to go beyond their cognitive faculties to allow them to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Luther describes faith:

Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12–13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.<sup>35</sup>

Luther's distinctive understanding of a theology of justification is important for "gospel-centered holiness." Luther sees "three things that are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation."<sup>36</sup> Luther goes on to explain how this union of faith, Christ, and imputation work together:

Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. "Because you believe in Me," God says, "and your faith takes hold of Christ, whom I have freely given to you as your Justifier and Savior, therefore be righteous." Thus God accepts you or accounts you righteous only on account of Christ, in whom you believe.<sup>37</sup>

For Luther, faith is "simply the work of God through the gospel. It is the new creation, the present Christ, and not a quality or virtue in a human being."<sup>38</sup> Luther thinks in terms of "union with the crucified and risen Lord,"<sup>39</sup> so all Christ is for believers he is through faith. This faith-union certainly has consequences in the lives of believers. Since the faith *itself* is the "ring" that binds Christ to believers, everything Christ is, he is for them. Christ is their righteousness and sanctification at the same time and in the same

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 35:370.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 26:132.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Seifrid, "Luther, Melanchthon, and Paul," 143-44.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 144.

way. The “gem” holds Christ and in Christ is holiness.<sup>40</sup>

Believers may *think* about doing good works, but faith has already determined the *certainty* of believers performing good works. Faith comes with the good works of Christ himself. Faith has a powerful effect on believers because it causes them to suffer for Christ’s sake. This faith is constantly about the business of doing “good works.” By making believers into “altogether different men” by killing the “old Adam,” faith does not ask about doing good works, but rather it does the good works before even asking the question: “Should good works be done?” If good works are not done, then it seems the *professing* believers are considered liars and unbelievers. Luther says, “Faith justifies without any works; and yet it does not follow that men are therefore to do no good works, but rather that the genuine works will not be lacking.”<sup>41</sup> This “faith” cannot exist apart from God’s word. Kolb says,

Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17), hearing the gospel that is God’s power (Rom 1:16), and God has commissioned his people to use his pronouncement of forgiveness, life, and salvation as his instrument. In the mouths of believers God’s Word becomes his re-creative deed.<sup>42</sup>

Walking with God in faith is synonymous with walking with God in holiness for Luther. Luther says, “For a true Lord makes his people like himself, and they walk in obedience and conduct themselves in harmony with the will of their Lord. And now as God, our

---

<sup>40</sup>First Cor 1:30 uses the cultic mean of the word ἁγιασμός (“holiness” or “sanctification”). According to Thiselton, “In no passage in Paul does it describe an advanced state of Christian living.” The context of the letter to the Christians in Corinth certainly attests to this fact as well. Thiselton continues, “Thus the ‘reversal’ through the cross of lack of status and self-esteem, whether in a shame-culture context or a guilt context finds expression in being clothed in the righteousness of Christ as divinely loved and accepted, and in being purified and set apart as one invited to the privileged place of intimacy with God, marked and identified by his name through Christ.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 193-94.

<sup>41</sup>Martin Luther, *Prefaces to the New Testament, Luther’s Works* [CD-ROM], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), 35:374.

<sup>42</sup>Kolb, *Justification*, 167.

Lord, is holy, his people are also holy. Therefore we all are holy, if we walk in faith.”<sup>43</sup>

The gospel comes with its own works in and through faith. Luther goes on to say how important it is that believers “continue in the pure, fixed meaning of faith, so to know that no work we can do or think avails before God.”<sup>44</sup> Luther counters an objection to his understanding of faith and holiness:

When we preach thus, reason falls in and says, Oh, if that be true, then we are not allowed to do any good work. Rough persons and blockheads also stumble and turn the very essence of Christianity into liberty of the flesh—thinking they may do whatever they wish. Such Peter meets here, stands before them, and teaches how we must use our Christian liberty only in relation to God. For there is nothing more necessary than faith, that I give God his honor and hold him as my God. That he is just, true, and merciful. This makes us free from sin and all evil. When I now have given God this, what I then live, I live for the good of my neighbor, to serve and help him. The greatest work that follows faith is that I confess with my mouth, bear witness, also with my blood, and spend my life where I may do the most good. However God is not in need of such work; but I do it in order that thereby my faith may be confirmed and published, so that others may be brought to faith. The other works follow, all of which must be directed to the end that I thereby serve my neighbors, all which God must work in us. Therefore it is of no use that we wish to live after the flesh and do whatever we lust after.<sup>45</sup>

The fruit of faith is always good works for Luther. Faith is the root of his understanding of holiness and the fruit is the necessary good works that are bound to follow. Good works are even bound up *with* faith and flow from that same faith in order to show what is actually in the heart of believers and unbelievers. Luther does specify examples of those “good works” (e.g., “confess with my mouth, bear witness, also with my blood, and spend my life where I may do the most good”) as well and insists on the *necessity* of those works. Luther summarizes his thoughts on 1 Peter 1:17:

Good works are the fruits and signs of faith, and God judges people according to such fruits, which must indeed here follow, in order that we may publicly see where faith or unfaith in the heart really is. God will not judge according to whether you

---

<sup>43</sup>Martin Luther, *Commentary on Peter and Jude*, trans. and ed. John Nichols Lenker (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), 67. Luther is commenting on 1 Pet 1:16, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

are called a Christian or are baptized, but he will ask you: ‘Are you a Christian? Then tell me where are the good works by which you can prove your faith?’<sup>46</sup>

Calvin and Luther certainly have a great deal in common and much can be said for these agreements. At the end of the day, there are still differences that will not be overcome while establishing the nature of progression in a doctrine of sanctification. Still, both sides can celebrate the fact that faith in Christ is the union that brings holiness into the lives of believers. God’s Word creates this faith and makes sanctification reality for believers. The way to accurately describe “gospel-centered holiness” is to answer three questions: (1) What is the nature of redeemed mankind’s need (i.e., the anthropological quandary of *simul iustus et peccator*)? (2) What is the place of the law in the lives of believers?, and (3) What is the definition of “progression” as it relates to the doctrine of sanctification.

The next section of this dissertation answers these questions from a “gospel-centered holiness” paradigm that expresses sanctification as a doctrine that arises from justification and is another way of speaking of salvation as ethical progress in the lives of believers. The “progress” is explained as a constant “renewal of faith” that humbles believers at the cross of Christ and constantly encourages them to love God with everything they are and love their neighbor as themselves.

### **Anthropology, Law, and Progress in Sanctification**

Believers, to some degree, hate what they are in and of themselves. They are not suffering from some type of depression, but a “healthy” Christian realizes just how sick in sin they still are, even though they have been delivered from the slavery of sin as a “power” of the old age that is passing away. Believers exclaim “Amen” to Paul’s statement in Romans 7:24-35: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve

---

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 70.

the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”<sup>47</sup> In any discussion of anthropology, it is important to note an understanding of both redemptive-historical categories as well as ontological categories. What is redeemed mankind in view of God’s story throughout history in the Scripture and what is mankind in lieu of his actual being? The two are not opposed, but there needs to be clarity in describing both of them as it relates to believers’ being in relation to sin.<sup>48</sup> On the one hand, believers are alive in Christ and dead to sin. Sin no longer can master them.<sup>49</sup> So what do Christians do when sin does seem to get the “upper hand?” Is redemptive-history going to make sense of their struggle? Are they not believers because they still see and hate their sin but cannot seem to purge it no matter how many means of grace they use? Believers need to find comfort in the fact that they are always *simul iustus et peccator* (i.e, simultaneously righteous and sinners). This reality is both comforting and somewhat disturbing. It is comforting knowing that believers have a hope in the righteousness of Christ (outside of themselves), but it is also frustrating that sin still seems to influence believers so much sometimes. In realizing that even redeemed humanity has sin issues, it is easier to be humble. Realizing the need to find strength in Christ, believers pursue holiness by “daily repentance and self-judgment,” which reminds them of what they truly are outside of

---

<sup>47</sup>Though it could be best to read this passage as the climax of a pre-conversion Jew (whether Paul or someone else), the sentiment is similar (cf. Rom 8:23) for believers who still have a deeper sense of their sin. See the conclusions of Moo and Kruse. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 465-66; and Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 311. It seems best to appeal to some traditional sense of the “sinful nature” as being an ontological reality that connects to the old age and does not pass away as long as believers have bodies in this world. See Michael Horton, *The Christian Life: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim’s on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 425-32, *ibid.*, 658n25.

<sup>48</sup>Horton says to avoid both an under-realized and an over-realized eschatology of sanctification. See his warnings in Horton, *The Christian Life*, 658-59.

<sup>49</sup>These conclusions were made in chap. 4 and can be seen in Rom 6:1-23. Christ is now their lord and sin has lost its power over them.

Christ: wretches and sinners.<sup>50</sup> Ironically, in the realization of what believers truly are apart from Christ, they find the greatest job. Horton says, “If we focus on our experience rather than on Christ, on what we see rather than what we hear, then instead of drawing us out of ourselves in faith our experience will drive us deeper into ourselves in alternating moods of self-trust and despair.”<sup>51</sup> Sin is indeed a power that drives believers to do things. Even though believers are free from their old master, that redemptive-historical reality does not mean “he” (i.e., “sin”) will not still try to recapture believers.<sup>52</sup> Part of the reality of sanctification is realizing the law still has to strip the vestiges of the old sinful self on a regular basis. At the same time, the gospel comes to believers and encourages their souls to find rest in Christ, the one who saves them from sin. Believers are caught up in the tension of the “already” of their lives in union with Christ, but the “not yet” is eagerly anticipated as it is then they will no longer struggle with sin. Though believers cannot locate some metaphysical reality of sin within them, it seems that some reality exists within them until they are glorified in heaven.

Believers are not “under law” as a power, but rather “under grace” (Rom 6:14). Believers are part of a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and the righteousness of God belongs to them through Christ (2 Cor 5:21). Believers do not serve God in sanctification by the law that held them captive (Rom 7:6). Instead, they serve in the new life of the Spirit and are under the “law of Christ” (Rom 7:6; 1 Cor 9:19-23). Their relationship with old, sinful realities and the powers they abused (including the “law”) has ended, but what about the fact that God’s law represents his holy character, and are not the Ten Commandments still important for today as a representation of God’s moral requirements? In order to

---

<sup>50</sup>Seifrid, “Luther, Melancthon, and Paul,” 151.

<sup>51</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 660.

<sup>52</sup>The world, flesh, and Satan still make war against believers (1 Pet 5:8-9; 1 John 2:4).

answer some of these questions, believers must first assert what they are in Christ and what the “law” is that should be used in their lives. Both Luther and Calvin taught on the Ten Commandments and how they were helpful for Christians. Certainly modern-day theologians should do no less.

As mentioned previously in this chapter and in the exegesis of Romans 6 in chapter 4, believers are ultimately understood to be bound in union with Christ. Everything Christ is, they are through faith (Gal 2:20). As a result of this new status in redemptive-history, believers are righteous and holy. They are not pure sinners in the eyes of God, but they are certainly not pure saints in their bodies and their interactions with the world. Carson shows that even Paul, being by birth a Jew, had flexibility in regards to the law (i.e., Mosaic Covenant), yet he still was under the law of Christ.<sup>53</sup> The concept of “law” is diverse for Paul and it is wise to respect the various ways he utilizes it. In general, Paul uses the term “law” to refer to “the sum of specific divine requirements given to Israel through Moses.”<sup>54</sup> Paul also uses the term to mean “demands of God” in general and even the “Word of God” in general.<sup>55</sup> In some sense, the law, as a covenant with Israel, no longer applies to Christians.<sup>56</sup> It is not less than God’s Word, but it is not God’s final

---

<sup>53</sup>The phrase is peculiar, but seems to give a similar connotation as the “master” and “slave” language of Rom 6. Paul serves a new master thanks to the shift brought about by the fulfilled promise of God in Christ’s death and resurrection. Paul could not be “flexible” and practice sin and break God’s demands (law in the sense of God’s requirements, demands, and revealed will), but he could view the Sinai Covenant given through Moses as something that no longer applied to him. Christ’s law constrained him. Whatever Christ’s law is, it is the foundation for Paul’s moral compliance. See D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 118-21.

<sup>54</sup>Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 299. Also See Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 104.

<sup>55</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 104.

<sup>56</sup>See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 387-91.

Word to believers.<sup>57</sup> The whole Mosaic law “bears witness to Christ” and now that same law must bear witness to Christ post-cross. Believers are not susceptible to the law on the account that they are “in Christ” and “under grace.” Believers are already holy in Christ (1 Cor 1:30). Still, the vestiges of the old sinful nature, that part of the reality that is passing away for believers, still exists and needs to be purged. The law comes to believers and reminds them of their sin and the sinful nature that still clings to them.<sup>58</sup> This law is only useful, though, in that it points to the gospel. The imperatives given to believers in the New Testament are gospel commands.<sup>59</sup> The gospel brings with it its *own* obedience by including faith in Christ as the foundation of Christian obedience. The law, as a Mosaic Covenant, has no power over believers, but the demands of God that are eternal (and mentioned in the New Testament) are used by God to convict believers of the remaining indwelling sin they still have. The demands associated as exhortations based on the gospel of Christ will empower believers to repent of sin and hold to Christ in faith. In him they pursue holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16) and make their calling and election certain (2 Pet 1:10).<sup>60</sup> In him they continually present themselves as living sacrifices

---

<sup>57</sup>Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 98.

<sup>58</sup>This “reminding” comes through preaching the law, but the law does not empower believers for Christian living. Only the gospel can save and grow a Christian. To use an illustration: the “weeds” of sin still must be “mowed” by the law, but the “grass” will only grow by the power of God through the gospel being grasped and the mind of believers being renewed (Rom 12:2) on a regular basis. In this sense, mortification and vivification takes place in the Christian life through various means (the ordinances, preaching, prayer, Bible study, community groups, Sunday School, etc.). All these things take place through Christ. Believers live and die in Christ and so continue to live and die in Christ throughout the rest of their lives. As they repent of sin once again, they return to faith in Christ as the comfort that propels them forward in their walk with him. For more on mortification and vivification, see Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 661ff. and Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 600ff.

<sup>59</sup>See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 391; Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 127; David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 143-48.

<sup>60</sup>Peter, like Paul, liked to “stir up” believers (2 Pet 1:12) in his exhortations, but bases his exhortations on the promises of God (2 Pet 1:4).

(Rom 12:1-2) to God.<sup>61</sup> Bayer summarizes this use of law in believers' lives from Luther's perspective: "Luther himself continually stressed the fact that the law should not be preached to Christians insofar as they are justified by the gospel. But it should be preached to them insofar as they are sinners and still belong to the old world."<sup>62</sup>

The nature of progress in sanctification is one of renewal. Christians "progress," not by being more holy through works, but rather by growing in faith in the promises they have in Christ. Sanctification takes time, but comes as a result of the work of faith in God's promises. Bayer says that when Luther

speaks about 'sanctification' he simply talks about justification. . . . Justification and sanctification are not for him two separate acts that we can distinguish, as though sanctification follows after justification, and has to do so. In talking about sanctification Luther stresses the institutional side of the event of justification.<sup>63</sup>

Instead of distinguishing them (i.e., justification and sanctification) as "acts," it is better to distinguish them as "two aspects of the same reality rather than two distinct points in the *ordo salutis*."<sup>64</sup>

Through union with Christ, believers make definite progress, just not in any modern concept of progress. Bayer says, "In the relation of our new nature to the old we do make progress."<sup>65</sup> This "progress" is ethical, not metaphysical. There is ethical progress without metaphysical pressure.<sup>66</sup> Believers make progress in the world (i.e.,

---

<sup>61</sup>This exhortation is made in the context of "God's mercies" and after Paul had just stated that "from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen."

<sup>62</sup>Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 67.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>64</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 650n6.

<sup>65</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 65.

<sup>66</sup>In a similar line of argumentation, Horton says, "In our pilgrimage, we are not simply growing in *our* holiness, but bearing the fruit of our union with Christ and *his* holiness." Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 654.

“secular progress”), but not in any soteriological sense. This progress is never “absolute and total.”<sup>67</sup> This progress grows as believers grow in repentance. They have a deeper understanding of the grace of God and experience a greater sense of dependence on him. This world is passing away, but the promises of God have come to pass in this world through God’s Word and in believers love for God and one another. The Holy Spirit has brought a seal and a peace that passes understanding and motivates believers to promote the gospel wherever they go. Believers do not have to be content with this world, but do have to love it and share the gospel with those who are perishing. Progress comes through the ordinances as believers are baptized (representing the work of Christ for them; Rom 6:1-6) and enjoy communion as a reminder of the blessings they have in Christ. Believers hear the Word, which contains God’s promise to them in the gospel.<sup>68</sup> Biblical preaching should be Christ-centered preaching because it is in Christ alone that the promises of the Old Testament find their fulfillment and then are enjoyed through faith by believers.<sup>69</sup>

### **Summary of Gospel-Based Sanctification**

Sanctification is all about God separating a people for his own use. Horton says, “[From] the outset . . . it is *God’s* action of electing, separating or cutting, claiming a people for himself.”<sup>70</sup> Sanctification is not about believers possessing God as much as it is about God possessing believers. Ultimately, progressive sanctification is about justification looked at from another perspective. The same God who grants faith and

---

<sup>67</sup>Bayer, *Living by Faith*, 65-66.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 50-52.

<sup>69</sup>See Goldsworthy’s work in *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1991) and *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005). Christians should read and preach the Scriptures from a “gospel-centered” perspective.

<sup>70</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 650.

keeps believers justified is the same God who grants faith and empowers believers to be sanctified. God's promises to make a holy people for himself and grasped and secured forever by faith-union, which brings Christ and all of his holiness to the record of wicked people. These believers grow in their knowledge of sin and in their faith in Christ as they repent of their sins and rest in the salvation purchased by their savior.

The holy and righteous law of God helps believers as they struggle with the remaining vestiges of an era that is passing away because they are now dead to sin and alive in Christ. They are "under grace," not "under law." Still, believers need the law to convict them because of sinful nature that remains. The law's conviction will then seem only for a moment as believers grow in holiness because they come to trust in Christ's promises more and more.

Believers serve their neighbors and submit themselves to God as an outward act of an inward change. In this sense, there is ethical progress as believers involve themselves in the world in political matters, in the church, in their jobs, etc. From faith comes obedience and holiness is demonstrated in the life of believers. The gospel comes with its own obedience in faith. Bridges says, "Faith and holiness are inextricably linked. Obeying the commands of God usually involves believing the promises of God. One definition of faith might be 'Obeying the revealed will of God and trust Him for the results.'"<sup>71</sup> The "results" of God's promises are accomplished in Christ and demonstrated by the faith of believers. Believers are part of the new creation and God's Word continues to grow them in holiness until they are in heaven and no longer have to figure out how to be holy.

---

<sup>71</sup>Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978), 145.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

What does it mean to *grow* in the Christian life? How do Christians “progress” in holiness after they have started believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do they have to do something *extra* in addition to believing that Christ alone saves them? Is “faith alone” enough to sanctify? If Christians do grow in their relationship with Christ and this growth is summarized as “sanctification,” what then does “holy progress” look like? All evangelical scholars, to varying degrees, articulate some theology of progress, but what is the *nature* of progress. This attempt to discover how Christians should talk about “growth” in their lives leads to the central question of this dissertation: “What is the nature of progress in a doctrine of sanctification?”

Chapter 1 of this dissertation dealt with theological concerns for “progress” in a doctrine of sanctification. The focus was on how Lutheran and Reformed positions had differing views on sanctification even though they shared a common understanding of the doctrines of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*.<sup>1</sup> The way forward to discussions of the nature of progress in sanctification was said to be found in some synthesis of the insights from both Lutheran and Reformed understandings of sanctification. “Personal growth in holiness,” ultimately, was said to be “growth in faith.” The methodology laid out in chapter 1 was essential for coming to a more gospel-centered approach to the nature of progress in

---

<sup>1</sup>Both views have similar starting points in the history of Protestant theology. They both share views of the Bible, God, Christ, humanity’s sin, and how God alone is the sovereign Savior of all those who believe in Christ. Conservative Lutherans and Reformers/Calvinists still hold closely to these traditional views and take pride in the work of Luther and Calvin.

sanctification. Chapter 1 showed how some Reformed theologians had a more “progressive” approach to sanctification that influenced how they described Christian growth.<sup>2</sup> Lutheran theologians had a more “justification” approach to sanctification. The two views were shown to be opposing and the way forward in the discussion on the nature of progress was said to be found in both the forefathers of both theological traditions, Martin Luther and John Calvin, a discussion of the biblical text of Romans 6, and in a theological formulation of justification/union that ultimately synthesizes insights from Reformed and Lutheran scholars who express the focuses of both justification and union in one theology of progressive sanctification. This theology of progressive sanctification also covers the importance of articulating anthropology, the law, and “progress” language in a theological formulation of growth in the Christian life through God’s Word and repentance.

Luther’s influence on the doctrine of justification is well-known, but many think his emphasis on justification has led to Lutherans “shouting” justification and “whispering” sanctification.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 2 showed Luther to be a man of the cross. His theology of the cross was the foundation for his articulation of all Christian doctrine. Luther’s approach was unique in that he spoke of biblical interpretation in terms of *oratio* (prayer), *meditation* (meditation), and *tentatio* (suffering). The first section of this chapter showed how Luther ultimately did not articulate a theology of sanctification that needed the law for Christian living, but that the Word of God worked continuously to still produce fruit in the life of believers. Justification was the matrix for how Luther understood everything in theology. For Luther, everything in theology began with the

---

<sup>2</sup>Though David Peterson, John Murray, Wayne Grudem, Louis Berkhof, and Paul Zahl are all mentioned, they are not the focus of more contemporary scholarship who represent major works that express a doctrine of sanctification in chaps. 3 and 4.

<sup>3</sup>Carter Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1999): 1-20.

cross of Christ and his work for believers. Faith was the focus of holiness for Luther. Since faith was a passive work of the Holy Spirit, works would flow out of the Christian life as the “fruit” of faith. Luther understood the law of God to be necessary in the Christian life. The law was not a guide for Christian living, but rather a tool to afflict the sinfulness that remained in Christians.<sup>4</sup>

In the second part of chapter 2, the dissertation showed how modern Lutherans discuss sanctification in terms of progress. Francis Pieper and Scott Murray had a more favorable view of “the third use of the law” and basically defined sanctification in terms of good works. Murray emphasized the necessity of an “objective standard” for sanctification, which was the third use of the law.<sup>5</sup> The moral law of God had to be the *objective standard* for Christian living for some Lutherans.

For other Lutherans, the law is necessary, but only in the sense that Luther talked about the law as a guide for sinners and the sinful element of Christians. Gerhard Forde and Oswald Bayer, along with Luther, understand justification to be the overall theme of Scripture. For them, being right with God is a part of sanctification. Sanctification may be described as a reminder that the sinner is alive in Christ and dead to his old way of life. For these three theologians, sanctification is grounded in faith and all of them were said to teach that faith comes as the passive work of God, which in turn produces the good works demanded by the law. The nature of progress in sanctification could be defined as a growth in *faith* in God’s justifying word.

John Calvin was influenced by Martin Luther, but had a different focus for his theological articulation of sanctification. In many ways, Calvin was also an “occasional” theologian in his rebuttal of accusations that the Reformation teaching of “justification by

---

<sup>4</sup>The law was necessary because Luther believed that believers were *both* righteous *and* sinners.

<sup>5</sup>Scott R. Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 14.

faith alone” was allowing Christians to live licentious lives. Calvin focused on a theology of God and union in his *Institutes*. Charles Partee showed how Calvin organized both his *Institutes* and his theology of sanctification according to the theme of “union with Christ.”<sup>6</sup> Union was the basis for Calvin’s understanding of justification and sanctification. Calvin saw justification and sanctification as two ways of looking at salvation and both made possible because of union with Christ. Calvin also focused on the importance of law in the Christian life. Though he would agree with Luther that Christians still wrestle with sin, he would also say Christians must mortify the flesh (sinful desires) by using the law properly.<sup>7</sup>

Following in the Calvinist tradition of sanctification, Robert Reymond, Anthony Hoekema, and Sinclair Ferguson all hold to a similar understanding of sanctification. All three theologians focus on union and the progressive nature of sanctification as a keeping of the moral law. For Calvin and these three modern theologians, the third use of the law was essential to the nature of progress in sanctification. Calvin emphasized that law-keeping came out of faith-union, but still said that the works of obedience to the moral law was a part of mortification and vivification in the Christian life.<sup>8</sup> For Calvin and his theological heirs, Christians cannot be sanctification without growing in holiness by keeping the moral law of God.

Chapter 4 emphasized the foundation of union with Christ as the foundation for believers continually presenting themselves to God since they were dead to sin and alive in Christ (Rom 6:1-11). Romans 6:12 focused on the necessity of obedience in the

---

<sup>6</sup>Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 40.

<sup>7</sup>See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 3, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and index Ford Lewis Battles, reissued ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 360-61.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

lives of believers. Believers were not to present themselves to be used as instruments (i.e., “weapons”) of sin, but rather to be used as instruments for righteousness. Believers are not “under law,” but “under grace” (Rom 6:14), which essentially means that the redemptive historical age and power of the law no longer holds power over their lives. The law, understood as the Mosaic Covenant, could no longer bind Christians.<sup>9</sup> Instead of an inevitable antinomianism that would make a mockery of believers being freed from sin, believers would “present” themselves to obedience, the new power of the new age in Christ. This “power” of obedience was said to be synonymous with the power of righteousness, which is the justifying work of God working in the lives of believers. Being a slave to righteousness was said to lead to sanctification (Rom 6:19). Justification and sanctification work together in the lives of believers. Submission to Christ, demonstrated in baptism (Rom 6:1-5), was said to be a summary of the union believers enjoy in Christ. Union with Christ brings righteousness and sanctification. Being freed from sin necessarily makes the believer have the fruit of sanctification and eternal life (Rom 6:22). The state believers find themselves in *right now* in Christ was said to be alive, righteous, obedient, and holy through the union they have with Christ. The gospel of Christ was said to have its own obedience and holiness. If the sin power brought only death, then the righteous sanctification of believers in Christ, freely given, brings only consistent behavior that reflects Christ, not sinful living (Rom 6:1, 15, and 23). The constant “presenting” believers must do was shown to be a submission to gospel realities that are true for them in Christ. Growing in sanctification in Romans 6 meant presenting oneself to gospel realities of union and righteousness.

Chapter 4 continued to explain how Paul understood believers in Corinth to be in union with Christ and how his sacrifice brought a holy standing that was true, even

---

<sup>9</sup>The “law” could not be divided clearly in Scripture as moral, civil, and ceremonial. The whole of the Mosaic Covenant no longer functioned as a power over believers in the new age of Christ.

though the Corinthians did not always exhibit behavior that was characteristic of their holy standing. Believers were said to be holy and they had been cleansed (1 Cor 6:11) by Christ's sacrifice. Christ was there redemption, justification, *and holiness* (1 Cor 1:30). Believers in Corinth were not holy because of *their* actions, but were holy because of God's action *alone* so that he *alone* would receive all the glory of their salvation (1 Cor 1:31). Paul made it clear that the Corinthian believers were no longer to live like they did before they were washed, sanctified, and justified by God's Holy Spirit through Christ (1 Cor 6:9-11). There were strong implications for progress in ethical behavior, but the *source* and *standing* of holiness was not in question. Rather, Paul used his confidence in their holy standing as the foundation for motivating them to live what they were in Christ.

Christ gave his life for the church. Ephesians 5:26 showed how the cleansing Word of Christ (the gospel) was the means by which Christ made his church holy. Christ sacrificed his life as the foundation for the church's holiness. Again, it was obvious that the church's holiness was not about what the church did, but what *Christ had done*. The bride of Christ, by being made blameless and holy by Christ, will be holy in its being in heaven when Christ presents the church to himself (Eph 5:27).

The book of Hebrews established a strong positional holiness in Christ for believers because of his unique, "once for all," good for "all time" sacrifice (Heb 10:10, 14). On the basis of this sacrifice, believers were still told they had to "strive" for holiness through discipline (Heb 12:10, 14). Without this "striving" there was no way believers could see God. The nature of progress in holiness in these passages involved looking back *to Christ's example* in overcoming the trial of the cross (Heb 12:2-3) as believers endured discipline. Suffering through discipline was the means by which God urged believers to strive for peace and holiness (Heb 12:10-11). Believers were only able to find grace through enduring in holiness by looking to Christ, not through allowing bitterness to take root in their lives and cause other trouble (e.g., Esau despising the blessings of God in Heb 12:15-17).

John had a similar message to what Hebrews and Paul's letters already said. Like Ephesians 5:26-27, it was clear that the Word of God's truth in the gospel of Christ was the purifying agent that made believers holy (John 17:17). Jesus said that he had also consecrated *himself* through obedience to God's will (to die on the cross for sinners) so that all those he had been sent to save could be saved (17:9, 19). Jesus was the one who set his followers apart to fulfill God's plan. The believers were sanctified for the mission of going into the world since Christ was soon to be gone. They were going to take his message to the world so that others would be made holy and be united to one another (17:18, 20ff.).

First Peter addressed suffering believers who used to live unholy lives and were being reminded to live in such a way that evidenced what they were in Christ (1 Pet 1:14-15). As Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:11, Peter let believers know that it was not permissible to live unholy lives that did not reflect the holiness of Christ. The calling of believers was the objective basis for sharing in what Christ was for them. The believers were to be holy in conduct (i.e., behavior) because of who Christ was (1:13, 15). Believers were to look to the future revelation of Christ (1:13) for hope. Believers are to base their holiness on the holy standing of God (1:16). God is holy, therefore believers will be holy. Holy living was said to be an outworking of the incommunicable attribute of God's holiness. Believers were promised they *would be* holy because they were ransomed by the blood of Christ (his sacrificial giving of his life for them (1:18-19)).

The nature of progression of holiness was not based on what *believers* were doing, but rather what *God* was doing and had done through Christ's sufficient, once for all sacrifice. According to the New Testament, holiness was shown to be primarily a matter of standing *in Christ*. If believers were to grow at all in their conduct (i.e., moral behavior), it was through remembering what they already were in Christ. Their standing was never in question. They were holy, even when they did not act like it, though all the biblical authors exhorted believers (especially those wrestling with sinful behavior) to

avoid unholy actions by reflecting on the holiness of God given to them through Jesus Christ. Unholy actions were indicators of unbelievers, not God's saints. Believers needed to avoid that behavior by going back to the cross and remembering the Word of God's truth that cleansed them.

Chapter 5 restated the theological conundrum of the nature of progress in sanctification as it differed between Reformed and Lutheran perspectives. Sanctification in Reformed theology differs from Lutheran sanctification primarily in the sense of law-keeping. Lutherans, in the tradition of Luther, do not agree with the law being used as a guide to Christian living other than to warn against wrongdoing and convict of sin when wrong has been committed. Luther, Bayer, and Forde all agreed on these points and also stress the closer relationship of justification and sanctification because justification was understood to be the unifying theme of theology, especially a theology of sanctification. Reformed and Lutheran theologians were both said to be able to offer something to each other to help in a formulation of a nature of progress in sanctification. The foundation for sanctification was said to be the faith-union of Calvin, which emphasized the redemptive-historical categories emphasized by modern scholars like Ferguson and Hoekema, and the doctrine of justification as a unifying theme of theology, as articulated by Bayer and Forde. Since believers still had some sense of sinfulness in their being, the law was still said to be necessary in the Christian life. The law was to be used to bring believers to repentance, but the gospel brought to believers through faith-union would be the focus and stimulus that actually caused believers to grow in ethical holiness.

In the end, the nature of progress was said to be found in a return to the cross of Jesus, which is the message of the gospel. Progress was not shown to be a "becoming holier" in the actual life of believers, but was shown to be a returning to the truth of being righteous in Christ. Progress in sanctification was shown to come through repentance and trusting in Christ anew. The service that would inevitably come through this repentance would only be a passive work of God through his Word. Reformed and

Lutheran views of the nature of progress could become more compatible with one another by focusing on the truths of faith-union and justification as the primary themes in a theological formulation of sanctification. God's gospel in Christ was said to come with its *own* obedience. This obedience was said to be in Christ and in the lives of believers as Christ lived in them by spontaneously creating good works for the world to see.

This study has taken on the daunting task of formulating the nature of progress in a doctrine of sanctification as gospel-centered holiness through historical theology, biblical exegesis, and systematic formulation. The attempt has only begun to set the stage of how not only Reformed and Lutheran theologians discuss growing in a relationship with Christ, but how all Christians strive to grow in godliness in a way that exalts the gospel through Christ alone. Contemporary believers live in a milieu of constantly seeking to upgrade in technology, education, medical advancements, and religious piety. With believers surrounded by legalism and licentiousness, it is no wonder they are confused about what makes a Christian holy and allows them to assess their standing in Christ accurately. Ironically, the place where believers first started is the place where they must return for their growth in holiness. Believers do not go *forward* in modern senses of progression, but rather go deeper in faith as they go *backward* to the cross of Christ and the union they enjoyed from the beginning of their salvation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Alexander, Donald L., ed. *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.
- Althaus, Paul. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966.
- Ames, William. *The Marrow of Theology*. Translated by John Dykstra Eusden. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968.
- Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.
- Barrett, C. K. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. 2nd ed. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Vol 4. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956.
- Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Edited and translated by William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Scripture and Authority Today*. Cambridge: Grove, 1999.
- Bayer, Oswald. *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theologie*. Handbuch Systematischer, Band 1. Gütersloh, Germany: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36. 2nd ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999.
- Becker, Ernest. *The Denial of Death*. New York: Free Press, 1973.
- Beeke, Joel R. *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 1999.
- Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1958.
- Berkouwer, G. C. *Faith and Sanctification*. Studies in Dogmatics. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952.

- Boyce, James P. *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. Reprint, Hanford, CA: Den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1989.
- Braaten, Carl E. *Principles of Lutheran Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
- Braaten, Carl E., and Robert W. Jensen, eds. *Christian Dogmatics*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Bray, Gerald. *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996.
- Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978.
- Brown, Colin, gen. ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.
- Brown, F., S. Driver, and C. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Brunner, Emil. *Dogmatics*. Vol 3. Translated by David Cairns and T. H. L. Parker. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Reissued, 1960. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
- Carson, D. A. *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Dabney, Robert L. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- Dagg, John L. *A Manual of Theology*. Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1990.
- Demarest, Bruce. *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. Edited by James Moffatt. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Estelle, Bryan D., Bryan D. Fesko, and David VanDrunen, eds. *The Law is not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Gordon Fee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1983.

- Forde, Gerhard O. *Justification by Faith—A Matter of Death and Life*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology is for Proclamation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006.
- Gaffin, Richard B., Jr. *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation*. London: Paternoster, 2006.
- Garrett, James Leo. *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*. Vol. 2. 2nd ed. North Richland Hills, TX: Bibal, 2001.
- Gerstner, John H. *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology*. Reprint, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996.
- Gill, John Gill. *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*. Baptist Faith Series. Book 1. Reprint, Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1839.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.
- Gritsch, Eric, and Robert Jenson. *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Gundry, Stanley N., ed. *Five Views on Sanctification*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Hall, David W., and Peter A. Lillback, eds. *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *Saved by Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Horton, Michael. *The Christian Life: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim's on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.
- Käsemann, Ernst. *Commentary on Romans*. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Kittel, Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 2. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Kolb, Robert. *Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method: From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Kolb, Robert, and Charles P. Arand. *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Kruse, Colin G. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47a. Dallas: Word, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hebrews 9-13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47b. Dallas: Word, 1991.
- Letham, Robert. *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011.
- Lints, Richard. *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Longenecker, Richard N. *Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41. Dallas: Word, 1990.
- Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Galatians*. Modern-English ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on Peter and Jude*. Translated and edited by John Nichols Lenker. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on Romans*. Translated by J. Theodore Mueller. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Luthers Vorreden zur Bibel*. Edited by Heinrich Bornkamm. Göttingen, Germany : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989.
- Mahaney, C. J., and Robin Boisvert. *How Can I Change? Victory in the Struggle Against Sin*. The Pursuit of Godliness Series. Gaithersburg, MD: Sovereign Grace, 1993.
- Marshall, Walter. *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 1999.
- McCain, Paul Timothy. *Concordia, the Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. Translated by William Hermann, Theodore Dau, and Gerhard Friedrich Bente. 2nd ed. St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.

- McGrath, Alister E. *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Mickelsen, A. B. *Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Mueller, John Theodore. *Christian Dogmatics*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1934.
- Murray, John. *Collected Writings of John Murray*. Vol. 2. The Claims of Truth. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.
- Murray, Scott R. *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2002.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Packer, J. I. *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pursuing Holiness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992.
- Partee, Charles. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. 3 vols. St. Louis: Concordia, 1953.
- Peterson, David. *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews.'* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*. New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Translated by John Richard De Witt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

- Ryle, J. C. *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots*. London: James Clarke, 1952.
- Schaeffer, Francis. *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*. London: Norfolk, 1970.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. The New American Commentary, vol. 37. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Seifrid, Mark A. *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*. New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 9. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Senkbeil, Harold L. *Sanctification: Christ in Action, Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1989.
- Shedd, William G. T. *Dogmatic Theology*. 3rd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003.
- Thielman, Frank. *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Webster, John. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Westerholm, Stephen. *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Wright, N. T. *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What St. Paul Really Said*. Oxford: Lion, 1997.
- Zahl, Paul F. M. *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

### Articles

- Bahsen, Greg. "The Concept of Self-Deception in Presuppositional Hermeneutics." *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (Spring 1995): 1-31.

- Bayer, Oswald. "The Being of Christ in Faith." *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (1996): 135-50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Freedom? The Anthropological Concepts in Luther and Melancthon Compared." *The Harvard Theological Review* 91, no. 4. (October 1998): 373-87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Justification as the Basis and Boundary of all Theology." *Lutheran Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 273-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Word of the Cross." *Lutheran Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 47-55.
- Bockmuehl, K. "Sanctification." In *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, 613-16. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. "The Reformed View." In *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander, 47-76. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.
- Fields, Bruce L. "Review of *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, by David Peterson." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (September 1998): 471-73.
- Forde, Gerharde. "A Lutheran Response." In *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander, 77-82. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Lutheran View." In *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander, 13-32. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988.
- Hawthorne, G. F. "Holy, Holiness." In *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, 485-89. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Henry M. Knapp. "Protestant Biblical Interpretation." In *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 633-38. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Kolb, Robert. "Contemporary Lutheran Understandings of the Doctrine of Justification: A Selective Glimpse." In *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbards and Daniel J. Treier, 153-76. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "God Kills to Make Alive: Romans 6 and Luther's Understanding of Justification (1535)." *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1998): 33-56.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Preaching the Christian Life: Ethical Instruction in the Postils of Martin Chemnitz." *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 275-301.
- Lightner, Robert P. "Review of *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* by David Peterson." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (July-September 1997): 375.
- Lindberg, Carter. "Do Lutherans Shout Justification But Whisper Sanctification?" *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (Spring 1999): 1-20.

- Marshall, I. Howard. "Evangelicalism and Biblical Interpretation." In *The Futures of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry, and Andrew West, 100-23. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.
- Moo, Douglas. "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View." In *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 319-405. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- Murray, John. "Definitive Sanctification." *Calvin Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (April 1967): 1-19.
- Peterson, D. G. "Holiness." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, 544-50. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Prayer in Paul's Writings." *Teach Us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson, 84-101. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- Porter, S. E. "Holiness, Sanctification." In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, 397-402. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Rees, Stephen. "Review of *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, by David Peterson." *Churchman* 112, no. 1 (1998): 77-79.
- Scaer, David P. "Sanctification in the Lutheran Confessions." *Concordia Theological Journal* 53 (July 1989): 165-81.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sanctification in Lutheran Theology." *Concordia Theological Journal* 49 (April-July 1985): 181-97.
- Seifrid, Mark A. "Luther, Melancthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate." In *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbans and Daniel J. Treier, 137-52. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Subject of Rom 7:14-25." *Novum Testamentum* 34, no. 4 (1992): 313-33.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. "'Behind' and 'In Front of' the Text: Language, Reference, and Indeterminacy." In *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 2: 97-120. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Webb, Barry. "Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation." In *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibson. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997.
- Wright, N. T. "The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." In vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, 395-770. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Zahl, Paul. "Mistakes on the New Perspective on Paul." *Themelios* 27, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 5-11.

### Dissertations

Bosson, Christopher James. "A Scriptural Appraisal of the Necessary Connection between Progressive Sanctification and Compatibilist Freedom." Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010.

Kim, Jay Jongsung. "The Concept of Holiness in the Pauline Epistles." Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004.

### CD-ROM and Digital Copies

Bushell, Michael S., and Michael D. Tan. *Bibleworks 6.0*. Norfolk, VA: Bibleworks, LLC., 2003.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: 55-Volume American Edition*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1957. In *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM]. St. Louis: Concordia, 2002.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works. Volume 26: Lectures on Galatians Chapters 1-4*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen. Kindle ed. St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Small Catechism*. Edited by T. G. Tappert, St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1959. In *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM]. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000.

ABSTRACT

SANCTIFICATION AS GOSPEL-BASED HOLINESS

Heath Shannon Rickmond, Ph.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
Chair: Dr. Chad O. Brand

This dissertation examines the progressive nature of sanctification in both evangelical Lutheran theology and evangelical Reformed theology. Chapter 1 describes sanctification from a Reformed and Lutheran perspective and says one must develop an understanding of sanctification that glorifies God through the principles of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. Attention is given to the important contributions of both sides and an approach is proposed that favors the Lutheran position, but with some important insights contributed by Reformed theology.

Chapter 2 begins with an analysis of Luther's theology in general and sanctification in particular. It continues to investigate some important modern, evangelical Lutherans who represent a justification-based sanctification grounded in a theology of the cross.

Chapter 3 examines Calvin's theology in general and sanctification in particular. It continues to investigate some important modern evangelical Reformed theologians who present a more progression-focused sanctification that is grounded in union with Christ.

Chapter 4 addresses the relevant biblical text of Romans 6 used by theologians to talk about sanctification. A biblical-theological approach is given that prepares the way for evaluating and proposing a theology of sanctification that is gospel-based.

Chapter 5 evaluates the benefits of Lutheran and Reformed approaches while seeking to synthesize insights from both to form a coherent, biblically faithful approach to talking about progression in the doctrine of sanctification.

## VITA

Heath Shannon Rickmond

### EDUCATIONAL:

Diploma, Appomattox County High School, Appomattox, Virginia, 1996  
B.S., Liberty University, 2000  
Adv. M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theology Seminary, 2003

### MINISTERIAL

Youth Minister, Midway Baptist Church, Phenix, Virginia, 1997-2000  
Family Minister, Brookneal Baptist Church, Brookneal, Virginia, Summers  
2001-2002  
Pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Richmond, Indiana, 2004-2005  
Church Planter/Pastor, Gospel Avenue Church, Richmond, Indiana, 2005-2010  
Family Life Minister, Larchmont Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2012

### ACADEMIC

Adjunct Professor in Theology, Liberty University, 2008-  
Professor of Bible, Christian Academy of Louisville, Southwest, 2009-

### ORGANIZATIONAL

Evangelical Theological Society  
Society of Biblical Literature