



THE PURSUIT
OF THE HOLY GOD:

ANSWERING THE CALL
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Final Report

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The Pursuit of the Holy God: Answering the Call of the Holy Spirit

Introduction

The subject of sanctification and holiness is of primary importance in our walk with God. As we approach this doctrine, we do so with the modest confession that we will not seek to be dogmatic or condescending toward hundreds, if not thousands, of other expositors, theologians, and pastors who have sought further light on this spiritual relationship. From the apostles and early church fathers, to the Reformers and Holiness movement, each sincere generation of scholars and believers have furthered our understanding and pursuit of holiness, “. . . without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 KJV). We wish to also confess that we want this document to be more of a call to holiness, rather than just a detailed exegetical study. At the end of the day, this study will demonstrate a need for each believer, as well as the church, to strengthen our resolve to pursue the Holy Spirit in our quest to be a holy people. This mission must be more than a scholarly or doctrinal exercise. Sanctification requires a renewal of actively seeking to make welcome the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than limiting His work to that of a one-time experience. Indeed, we must commit ourselves to become maturing children of God who fulfill the exhortation of Paul: “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ. . .” (Philippians 1:27 NKJV). Therefore, we recommend to the 98th International Assembly that the following document supersedes any past or present declarations or rulings concerning sanctification and holiness:

The Bible on Sanctification

Hallowed Be Your Name

“Hallowed be your name,” a phrase that has been spoken innumerable times, for thousands of years, in hundreds of languages. Yet these simple words contain the core of God’s plan. This plan encapsulates God’s design for Israel, the sacrificial system, the cross and Christ’s suffering. It even deals with our lives now and hints of the future that is still to come. This plan is all about the holiness of God. It is here in a daily calling for God’s name to be holy that one flees from hypocrisy, legalism, or cheap grace, and instead hopes that God’s holiness is clearly reflected into his or her world.

During the most well-known sermon of Jesus’ ministry in Matthew 6:9, He taught the crowd and His disciples how to pray. There are multiple requests that are to form this prayer, “your kingdom come,” “give us this day” and others. However, the one which Jesus encourages us to pray first and foremost is “hallowed be your name.” It is a request that the name of God be made holy,¹ “. . . a

¹ M. S. Heiser. (2005). *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*. Logos Bible Software.

prayer that he will bring people to a proper attitude toward him. It expresses an aspiration that he who is holy will be seen to be holy and treated throughout his creation as holy.”²

The importance for the study of holiness is rooted in the truth that holiness is not primarily focused on humanity. It is first and foremost rooted in the Holy One who is distinct and separate in person and morals from His creation. It is this holy God who calls His people to a life separated for His service and separated from sin. This prayer for God’s name to be holy connects with Ezekiel 39:27 where God states that He will show Himself holy. Israel had profaned God’s name through the practice of idolatry and God had sent them into exile. However, the exile had also caused the surrounding nations to ridicule the character of God. Yahweh would not allow this derision of His name to remain. He would restore His people to the Promised Land in order that He would be seen as holy.

When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations (Ezekiel 39:27 NIV).

Human’s perception of God’s holiness is important to God and is central to our own holiness. It is in recognizing His holiness that we can clearly see ourselves and our deep need for Him, as well as the depth to which He calls us. This is where the study of holiness must begin, in the first pages of Scripture, where we witness God as He reveals Himself as holy.

The Holy God

The revelation of holiness is illuminated when Moses is drawn to a bush that is burning, yet is not consumed:

Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:5, 6 ESV).

This encounter with God begins a flood of revelatory moments where Yahweh reveals His holy nature in contrast to the gods of Egypt and the other pagan religions. Pagan worship was a complex life of appeasement and bribery to manipulate the gods for their favor. These gods were amoral at best and often immoral as Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. Therefore, the problem with worship was not merely idol worship but the perception of the morality of God and His relationship with creation. God was perceived to be too much like us, and a part of us. It is into this worldview that God tells Moses to remove his sandals because he is in a place that has been made holy by God’s presence. At this burning bush theophany, God begins to teach Moses an important lesson concerning His holy nature. Moses’ lesson: there is a distinct danger in being in close proximity to God personally without being adequately prepared.

² L. Morris. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (145). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

This passage, with its ‘come-no-further’ command, is remarkably parallel to that of Exodus 19:9–25. In this passage, a series of conditions of sanctification, procedures that confer holiness and distance (e.g., “Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy” [v. 23]), are imposed upon the Israelites. Thus what the people would eventually have to learn from God through him, Moses now began to learn from God.³ In this first moment of God’s self-revelation, Moses hides from God out of fear of what he might see. Moses now understands that glaring into the holiness of God is a life-changing experience that is both comforting and fearful, simultaneously. This is indeed a crisis experience in the life of Moses that transformed his life and heightened his own awareness of God.

In Exodus 19, this expanding revelation of God’s holiness grows as God now confronts the Hebrew people with the revelation of His holiness. The people are encamped in the same mountainous area in which Moses had previously experienced God’s holiness. They have just recently experienced the delivery of the Passover and crossing of the sea. The defeat of the Egyptian gods through the plagues has been powerful and complete. Although God has expressed His power, He now reveals His holiness at Mt. Sinai. The people are commanded to sanctify or consecrate themselves. They are to wash their clothes. They are to put limits which neither man nor animal are to cross. They are not to run into God’s presence haphazardly. As Moses was called to remove his sandals, the Israelites are preparing to meet the holy God:

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” Moses said to the people “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was (Exodus 20:18–21 NIV).

Just as Moses turned away in fear at the bush, the people are overwhelmed by the presence of a God that they could not control or manipulate. They are confronted by the holy God and they, too, realized the transforming power of the holiness of God upon Moses.

The Holiness of God

The question is raised then of God’s holiness. What exactly is meant by the phrase, “the holy God?” Isaiah 6 is just one of many occasions where individuals are confronted with intimate experiences of the holy God:

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy

³ Stuart, D. K. (2007). *Vol. 2: Exodus* (electronic ed.), Logos Library System; The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, page 114.

is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke (Isaiah 6:1–4 ESV).

Isaiah states that he saw the Lord. This event is transformational in the prophet’s life. The whole experience of seeing the Lord (*adona* – the sovereign one)⁴ shakes him to the very core of his humanity. In this moment, Isaiah is confronted with the vast separation between the Most Holy God and himself as a sinful man. Rudolf Otto describes this type of experience as the “awful mystery” where we are drawn to God and yet desire to run from Him.⁵

Isaiah describes in His vision that God is “high and lifted up.” This phrase points to God’s transcendence. This is how holiness as ‘separate from’ reveals God’s nature. God is completely separate and distinct from that which He created. It is in coming to face this completely separate reality that Isaiah, Moses, the children of Israel, and later Peter all experience the ‘awful mystery’ of God (Matthew 17:4). It is in this moment that Isaiah hears the seraphim cry out, “Holy, holy, holy.” All that his mouth can utter are the words “Woe is me.”

This transcendence means that God is separate from creation in every way. He is beyond time and space; these are mere components of His creation. In God, there is no sense of need, as all of the rest of creation experiences. He is complete in His own Trinitarian nature. There is infinite moral distance from sinful man, as it is impossible for God to be tempted by sin (James 1:13). Even His reason and purposes exceed our own as expressed in Isaiah:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8, 9 ESV).

This is the holy God by whom Isaiah was confronted and cried, “Woe is me.” He transcends or is completely separate from us in every way. He is ‘completely other and higher’ than we can imagine. Isaiah had a crisis experience by encountering a holy God, and was forever changed by this event in his life. Similarly, at the miracle of the great catch of fish recorded in Luke 5, Peter recognizes that this teacher, Jesus, is more than he appears to be. He is confronted by the greatness of Jesus and replies “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8 NIV). Even cloaked in human flesh the recognition of the holy nature of Jesus was transformational.

When people were confronted with this God who is holy, whether it was a burning bush, vision of God’s throne room, or being with Him in a boat, they have been changed. The recognition of the transcendent God resulted in these individuals being more desirous to be separated from the corruptions of their world and ready to follow the mission that God had for their lives.

⁴ Sproul, R. C. *The Holiness of God*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, page 32.

⁵ Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. London, Oxford University Press, 1923, p. 123.

Expanded View of Holiness

This revelation of God as holy then begins to impact the understanding of God's call for His people to be holy. Yahweh begins with an expression of His purpose for the deliverance of this people from the slavery of Egypt:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel (Exodus 19:5, 6 ESV).

They had the privilege and responsibility of being God's treasured possession among all people. This presented new ideas to this group which had grown up in a polytheistic world. Yahweh was revealing himself as the holy God over the whole earth. This was very different from the polytheistic worldview which perceived gods as over geographic areas, or particular elements such as the sun, fertility, storms, and seas. However, this unique relationship had purpose, that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The challenge to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" represented the responsibility inherent in the original promise to Abraham in Genesis: "You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Priests stand between God and humans to help bring the humans closer to God and to help dispense God's truth, justice, favor, discipline, and holiness to humans. Israel was called to such a function.⁶

Israel as God's treasured possession would have the responsibility to exhibit holiness in her worship and ethical lifestyle. This responsibility was not for the religious elite, but corporately each person in the nation was to portray holiness. This Mt. Sinai event begins to give understanding of the term "holy" (*kdsh*) in the Old Testament. All forms, adjective, noun or verb, of "*kdsh*" carry the idea of being set apart or consecrated.⁷ In its verbal forms it is variously translated: to be set apart, consecrate, be holy, dedicate, purify. In its form as a noun "*kdsh*" it is translated: "consecrated or consecrated thing, dedicated or dedicated gifts, holiness, holy, holies, holy ones, holy portion, holy things, most holy, most holy place, most holy things, sacred, sacred things, sacrifices, sanctuary, set apart."⁸ It is in this way that things were made holy such as the tabernacle or its furnishing, priests and their vestments. They were holy in that they were set apart from the profane for the purposes designed by God. Ultimately, people were set apart from the profane for God's purposes.

Unfortunately, Israel did not follow through with their call to be holy. Rarely did they give up worship of Yahweh; they just included the worship of the gods of the nation's surrounding them. They rejected their call to be set apart from those nations; there was very little difference between them and the surrounding nations in their worship or morality. The prophets often describe this sin with the graphic term "Israel played the whore." Ezekiel 16:16 (ESV) is one such example: "You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore..."

⁶ D. K. Stuart. *Exodus: Vol. 2*, (Electronic Edition). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007, page 423.

⁷ R. L. Thomas. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated edition (G1)*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998.

⁸ R. L. Thomas, *Ibid*.

This failure to be a holy nation is what propels God to reject both Judah and Israel. Judah experiences 70 years of exile as punishment at the hands of the Babylonians. Yet, as this punishment is about to begin, Jeremiah reveals a very different future for God's people, a time when the law will be known and followed by God's people:

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:31–33 NIV).

It is with this hope that we read the New Testament. Although the language has changed to Greek, the noun holy (*hagios*), and its derivatives translate: holy, pure, saints, and sanctification while the verb form (*hagiazō*) translates, “to make holy, consecrate and sanctify.”⁹ The Old Testament revelation of God's holiness and His plan for our sanctification carries over and even expands in the New Testament. Peter, drawing on the Old Testament, encourages Christians to holiness: “But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15–17 ESV). Even God's design for His people to express corporate holiness is brought into the New Testament.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10 NIV).

The purpose of this corporate holiness is driven by its missional nature, that we might be priesthood for others and to declare the praises of God. Jesus expressed in John 17:17 that His design was to sanctify them, ‘set them apart’ in order that He could send them into the world. The question remains, will this new people of God take up the challenge of holiness? The difference now is that God will not be coming in a bush or a storm. They will know the holy God, up-close and personal. He will walk with them, eat with them, and call them to follow His holy life.

Matthew 16:24, 25, Mark 8:34–38, and Luke 9:23–27 each record an event where Jesus describes what it means to be one of His followers. Mark records it like this: “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” (Mark 8:34 ESV).

These words of Jesus are instructive for a discussion of holiness. Would His disciples choose to reflect the holy lifestyle of Jesus? Here disciples are called to deny (*aparnesastho* - aorist imperative) themselves take up (*airo* - aorist imperative) a cross and follow

⁹ H. R. Balz & G. Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 1*. Wheaton, IL: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990, page 16.

(*akolutheo*-present imperative) Jesus. Each verb is imperative, which should be translated as commands to action on the part of the followers. Luke and Mark use a present imperative verb for follow while Matthew continues the use of the aorist for all three. While the aorist imperative denotes a single act of denying (crisis experience)—for today, the present imperative often denotes a continuous act of following (a process)—day after day.¹⁰ Luke goes further and includes the idea of continuous action with his inclusion of the word “daily” in the command to take up one’s cross. So even in this primary passage in the gospels we see an emphasis on the first moment someone denies themselves, and takes up their cross (crisis experience) as well as concern for continuing a life of following Jesus (a process). To deny one’s self is “a rejection of a life based on self-interest and self-fulfillment.”¹¹

This is similar to Paul’s “consider yourself dead” in Romans 6:11. Cross bearing meant that we were prepared to give up our life for our Lord as He has already given his for us. Following Jesus meant more than a mere physical tagging along with Jesus’ group. It meant a following of his words, which represented his lifestyle and mission. In these passages Jesus is concentrating on the actions which man is required to accomplish. There is denying/lifting a cross following that must take place within the lives of Jesus disciples. With these words of Jesus in mind, we can turn to the rest of the New Testament to see how other writers expressed these concepts of the life of holiness.

Sanctifying Work of the Cross

Throughout the book of Romans, Paul shows the human condition under the dominion of sin. In Romans 3:23, (NIV) he states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Under this reality are included both Jews and Gentiles. In chapter Romans 1:18–32, Paul describes the life of sin in the Gentiles that represented the former lifestyle of many of the Roman believers, as one of complete depravation and reversal of the natural customs established by God in Creation. In Romans 5:12 (ESV), he states that “sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.” This means that no human has escaped the power and dominion of sin.

Paul says that sin enslaves (*douleuein*) (6:6), exercises dominion (*basileuto*) (6:12), and rules (*kyrieusei*) over man (6:14). Sin entered the world through one man, Adam, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men (5:12). This is what Christ came to deal with. Richard E. Howard in his book *Newness of Life*, says that “sin has been defined as self-delusion, self-reliance, listening to oneself instead of listening to God, man’s self-assertion in rebellion against God, turning toward oneself and making oneself the center of his self.”¹²

Through sin, man changed the sovereignty of God over him and made himself sovereign over himself. The consequence of changing the sovereignty of God for the sovereignty of the self is that man is now under the dominion of sin and death, being unable to free himself of its tyranny. What is the tyranny of life dominated by sin? In Romans 5:6–10, Paul portrays the human condition and the salvific work of God:

¹⁰ H. P. V. Nunn. *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (49). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2003,

¹¹ R. H. Stein. *Luke, Vol. 24* (Electronic Edition), Logos Library System. The New American Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, page 279.

¹² Richard E. Howard. *Newness of Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975, page 42.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life (Romans 5:6–10 NRSV).¹³

When Paul describes the condition of man under the power of sin, he describes him as weak, ungodly, sinner and God’s enemy. Man was morally weak, constantly breaking God’s laws, and irreverent to Him. As an enemy of God, man was doomed to God’s wrath, and was actively fighting against His kingdom. Under the dominion of sin, man was powerless to change his condition. But God did not leave us there. The cross of Christ changed the human condition from helplessness and hopelessness to hope and redemption.

In Romans 6, we find Paul’s assurance that the believer can live a life of holiness. To demonstrate that, he states that the believer is identified with Christ through his death and resurrection (vv. 1–14), and that now the believer is a slave to Christ and righteousness (vv. 15–23). Paul considers the new condition of the believer recognizing that now the believer has “died to sin” (v. 2), has been “baptized into Christ” (v. 3), has been “baptized into his death (v. 3), “buried with Him through baptism” (v. 4), his old self has been “crucified so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless” (v. 6), and the believer has “died with Christ” (v. 8).

Continuing in Romans 6:6, Paul moves from death and burial through baptism, to death of our old self through crucifixion. Crucifixion is an internal act of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, through which the old man is nailed to the cross and rendered powerless, so that he can walk in newness of life. Paul declares that we know that our old self (man) was crucified with Christ, so that the body of sin might be destroyed (made powerless, unproductive), that is, to invalidate the old self, so we might no longer be enslaved to sin but live a victorious life. It is interesting to note that the verb *katargethe* (might be destroyed) is in the subjunctive mood, implying expectation of destruction.

Paul continues developing his argument stating that whoever has died (past tense) is freed (perfect: ongoing results)¹⁴ from sin (v. 7). Whoever has been crucified with Christ is no longer under the dominion of sin. This death produced a freedom that happened in the past but its effect is felt at the present, therefore the person continues being set free from the slavery of sin. The death of the old man produces freedom from sin, so we are not enslaved to sin.

Romans 6: 8–11 deals with the fact that Christ died to sin once and for all. His death was a definitive one, making only one sacrifice. Now He lives to God. Paul states that if we have died

¹³ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Ibid, Romans 5:6–10.

¹⁴ Perfect tense: The verb tense used by the writer to describe a completed verbal action that occurred in the past but which produced a state of being or a result that exists in the present (in relation to the writer). The emphasis of the perfect is not the past action so much as it is as such but the present “state of affairs” resulting from the past action. (Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* [Logos Bible Software, 2013; 2013]).

with Christ, we will also live with Him. That means that in the same way that death no longer has dominion over Him; death no longer has dominion over us. The same way that Jesus was raised from the dead, now living to God is the same life that we are called to live. Paul concludes this section giving an imperative call to consider ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” This verb “to consider ourselves” (present imperative), encourages the believer to an ongoing, habitual process. Before, we were dead to God and alive to sin, but now through Christ we have experienced a reversal of the disobedience of Adam, being alive in Christ. In verses 12 through 14, Paul states that as a result of being dead to sin, but alive to God, we have to live according to what we are in Christ. Under this new condition, we must not let sin exercise dominion in our mortal bodies, to make us obey their passions (v. 12). In this section, Paul uses a series of imperatives, two negatives and one positive, to tell us what not to do and what to do as people dead to sin and alive to God.¹⁵

In the first imperative “do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies,” Paul uses the word *basileuto*, which means ‘be a king, control completely.’ If sin is our king, he will exert his control over us to make us obey the passions (lust, deep desires) of our bodies. The second imperative Paul uses is “no longer present” (*peristaneti*: ‘cause to be in place, provide’) your members to sin as instruments (the term refers to a soldier’s weapons) of wickedness (*adikias*: unrighteousness). We are not to make provision for our members to be instruments of unrighteousness. Our physical body is the battleground for temptation. The third imperative is in the positive, and is a command to “present ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, presenting our members to God as instruments of righteousness.” Paul closes this section assuring that sin will not rule over us, since we are not under law but under grace.¹⁶

Romans 6:18 declares: “...and that you, having been set free from sin” (aorist passive participle: the believer has been freed both from the penalty of sin [justification] and the tyranny of sin [sanctification]), “have become slaves of righteousness” (aorist passive indicative: the believer is freed from sin to serve God).¹⁷ This righteousness leads us to holiness (v. 19). This means that the work of the cross has accomplished both justification and sanctification for us.

Subsequently, we must see salvation in different terms than we have often used with no malicious intent. For instance, when a person is converted or ‘born again,’ we often referred to this experience by saying the new believer is now *saved*. In reality, this is only the beginning of the Christian’s walk with God. Indeed, they have been converted, but the overarching dynamic of salvation comes through a spiritual journey that will not be completely perfected until all believers are changed (delivered) when they meet Christ in the air at His coming:

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the

¹⁵ Robert James Utey, vol. Volume 5, *The Gospel According to Paul: Romans*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Romans 6:8–11.

¹⁶ *Ibid* Romans 6:12–14

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Romans 6:18–19.

imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:50–58 NASB).¹⁸

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Sanctification

The new life in Christ—the result of the work of the cross—sets believers apart and consecrates them for the service of God. This work is immediate and the believer is said to be sanctified ‘positionally.’ The work of sanctification continues, however, and must come to full actualization in the life of every believer. The work of God to bring believers to perfection is a cooperative effort that places responsibility on believers to respond appropriately to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The response, by necessity, begins with a sincere desire toward self-denial. Jesus admonished His followers saying, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34 NRSV). It is evident that the cross that Jesus was referring to was prophetic of the sacrifice that He would eventually have to make. Jesus himself was sanctified (set apart) for God’s service, but it was realized by His obedience to the will of the Father. The positional aspect of sanctification requires nothing more than the believer’s surrender to Christ. The actualization, however, occurs through continual surrender and self-sacrifice. In Galatians 5:22, Paul describes the reality of the sanctified life as the product (fruit) of the Holy Spirit. The Christological aspects of sanctification are well appreciated and prominent in our doctrinal formulations. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul referred to Corinthians as being “sanctified *in Christ Jesus* (emphasis added).”

However, in many cases, the pneumatological aspects of sanctification have not been emphasized. The term sanctification of the Spirit (rather, the sanctifying work of the Spirit) is used by Paul several times in his writings. As part of the salvific work of God through Christ, the Holy Spirit effectuates the plan of salvation in the lives of believers. It is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies (sets apart) and empowers believers to live sanctified (consecrated) lives. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul uses the term “sanctification *through the Spirit* (emphasis added). The phrase here is a subjective genitive indicating that the sanctification is wrought by the Holy Spirit. Peter expresses the same idea in 1 Peter 1:2 as he greets the believers that were scattered because of the persecution. He wrote, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through sanctification of the Spirit** (emphasis added), unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (NRSV). It is clear from these two texts that there was a common understanding of the Holy Spirit as both the initial active agent in the work of sanctification and in the ongoing process of sanctification within the believer.

¹⁸ Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible. Chattanooga, TN: New American Standard Bible, 2008 (1 Cor. 15:50–58).

We must embrace as Pentecostals our biblical recognition that our Trinitarian theology recognizes the Holy Spirit as a lifetime influence within a believer's life. We must never limit the scope of the Holy Spirit's role in a linear fashion that sees him simply applying the finished work of the cross but unrelated to our daily walk toward holiness. As one Pentecostal scholar has observed: "More recent Trinitarian theology has moved significantly beyond the limitations of this linear approach to the involvement of the Trinity in salvation — in the direction of a more interactive (perichoretic and koinoniac) model. Within this model, the Spirit's role in the giving and sharing of life would be involved in both Christ's accomplishment of righteousness and our participation in it, with no possibility of confining the Spirit to the subjective appropriation of an atonement that can be described quite well without the Spirit's help."¹⁹ In reality we must realize that the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification includes such ministrations as Spirit conviction, experiential transformation, and greater revelations of Christ, strength in our daily walk with God, as well as the infusion and growth of love toward others. Such work of the Holy Spirit is referred to by Jesus when speaking to the disciples about the work of the Comforter (*Paraklete*):

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove (convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come (John 16:7–13).

Although we usually define the sanctified life by the things we refrain from (outward activities), the sanctified life is more accurately pictured by the development of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit highlights one side of the collaborative effort. The other side is represented by Paul's statement in Galatians 5:24 and deals with what believers have to do. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh (*sarx*) with the affections and lusts." Paul then makes the declaration, "If we live (*zao* - to have true life and worthy of the name) in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. The phrase is better rendered as, "Such being your principle of life, adapt your conduct (walk) to it."²⁰

Similarly, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Although Paul lists sanctification before justification in this litany of action, this in no way should be taken as any order of chronological importance. According to fact, the order would be justified, washed (baptism), sanctified; but as Ellicott justly remarks, "...in this epistle this order is not set forth with any studied precision, since its main purpose is corrective."²¹

¹⁹ Frank D. Macchia. *Justified in the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2010, Page 297.

²⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (NASB). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2008, page 2278.

²¹ *Ibid*, page 2079.

In another instance Paul writes to the church at Colossae. He addresses the saints at Colossae as “God’s chosen people, and holy (Colossians 3:12). As a result of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the believers are then commanded to “clothe yourself.” The Greek for clothe (put on in the KJV) is *enduo* which means “to put on as a garment.” The verb is in the aorist imperative, which indicates an immediate even urgent, effective action. What the believers are called ‘to put on’ is enumerated in the following list that Paul uses to contrast with what was ‘put off’ (Colossians 3:8). The garments which they were to ‘put on’ (make a part of their lives) were: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and long-suffering.²² The connection between this text and Galatians 5:19–23 is evident.

In addition to the issues regarding the second coming of Jesus that caused some problems in the churches at Thessalonica, Paul addresses the pervasive problem of sexual immorality. In Thessalonica, besides the ordinary licentious customs of the Gentiles, immorality was fostered by the Cabeiric worship. “About the time of Paul, a political sanction was given to this worship by deifying the emperor as Cabeirus.”²³

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul expresses the importance of believers’ response to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. He says, “We beseech you brethren and exhort you by the Lord.” The intensity and the urgency of the apostle’s concern are evident by the use of these two terms. The concern is that they obey the word that they “have received.” The word instructed them on how they were to “please God.” In verse 4 of the same chapter he writes, “For this is the will (*thelema* - refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event) of God, even your sanctification (*hagiasmos* - literally means sanctification and includes the ideas of consecration, purification, dedication and holiness). The term *hagiasmos* is found only in the Greek Bible and among ecclesiastical writers. It has the technical idea of consecration to a god or goddess that did not necessarily include the idea of holiness as we know it. A. T Robertson observes that:

In secular Greek *hagiasmos* conveyed the technical idea of consecration to a god or goddess that did not include holiness in life. So Paul makes a sharp and pointed stand here for the Christian idea of sanctification as being “the will of God”...as further explained by the... infinitive that ye abstain from fornication. Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees. Your sanctification is literally, “your sanctifying.” Keep the cultural context in mind as you study this section. Remember that a major problem for the early church was maintaining sexual purity.²⁴

The call to sanctification (separation, consecration) in the life of the followers of Christ was to be qualitatively different from that of the pagan temple devotees. Their sanctification (in that context) was to be manifested in their abstinence from fornication and to “possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.” Although there is some controversy regarding the term “vessel” (whether it refers to the body or specifically to the wife), there is no doubt that Paul wanted them to know that God’s work of sanctification in their lives was to be reflected in their lifestyle. Although God’s sanctifying work was completed in Christ Jesus on the cross (past) and is being worked out by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers (present), it is important to always keep in mind that there is always the future expectation of glorification

²² James Strong. *Strongs Exhaustive Concordance*. Iowa Falls, IA: Riverside Books, 1995, (Colossians 3:12).

²³ D. Edmond Hiebert. *The Thessalonian Epistles (A Call to Readiness)*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971, page 165.

²⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert. *Ibid*, 167.

(complete sanctification) at the coming of the Lord. This, too, will be a work of the Holy Spirit in the believer (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53). In the letter to the Thessalonians, we see that the eschatological (end-time) perspective is always at the fore. The very God that sanctified them was going to preserve them until the end. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 he writes, “And the very God of peace (a better rendering is the God of peace himself) sanctify (separate, consecrate, cleanse) you wholly (*holotelēs*—perfect, complete in all respects). The term *holotelēs* also has the meaning of consummation or end.²⁵ God’s sanctification (setting apart) of his people by the Holy Spirit was part of the eternal plan that was to be greater than any individual concern. God’s sanctifying work was to have a corporate aspect as the church, the body of Christ, reflects the glory of the holy God to the world.

Corporate Sanctification

From the inception of Christ’s ministry, when He “turned the water into wine” at Cana (John 2:1–11), there was an underlying recognition of the corporate responsibility to care for the welfare of others beyond one’s own personal agenda or comfort. While some might question such application, the Holy One was remarkable in His actions that were not necessary, yet they were beneficial to those around Him. In a similar vein, Paul in the closing passages of Romans, writes to the Jewish brethren in Rome to help them understand their corporate responsibility to behave themselves in such a way as to demonstrate to unbelievers the holiness of Jesus Christ (Romans 14:13–15:6). Like Jesus, they are not to please themselves, but to deny even their rights so that others would see their conduct of peace and their love for one another that caused them to “glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:6). Corporate sanctification becomes more and more essential in a society inundated with self-centeredness and individualism; especially within cultures that give little or no testimony to Jesus Christ and His holy purpose of selflessness. In Ephesians 5:26, 27, it reads:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish (NRSV).

This section of Ephesians falls under the section known as the “Household Code.” Paul understood the sacred bond of marriage as a sanctifying relationship. The husband was set apart for the wife and vice versa. The husband’s love for his wife was to be mutually rewarding and sanctifying. The mutual love would be sanctifying love. Any disruption of this relationship was to be seen as sin. Paul understood the sanctifying work of Christ in this context. Christ loved the church and gave (*paradidomi* - to give into the hands of another) himself up for her. He did this in order to make her holy (sanctify). The word sanctify here is translated from the Greek, *hagiasē*. The verb is used here in the aorist tense which indicates that it is a past completed event. Because of the sacrifice of Christ, the Ephesians were in fact sanctified. The text indicates their sanctification was accomplished through cleansing. The term cleansing is translated from *katharizo*, which means to

²⁵ James Strong. Ibid, 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

cause something to become clean. In a spiritual sense, it means to purify from pollution and guilt of sin. In secular Greek, *katharizo* occurs in inscriptions for ceremonial cleansing. This expression is not found anywhere else in the Pauline corpus. He emphasizes the corporate dimension by asserting that it is the church which is sanctified through Christ's death.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul writes: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

By this opening verse in Corinthians, a person cannot fail to see that a fundamental problem with the Corinthian believers was the selfish attitude of the church members who desired their freedom above the well-being of others. Paul's writings demonstrate his concern for both the individual and the corporate body. There is a distinctly corporate dimension to his thoughts. This dimension shows up when Paul writes that any act which harms an individual Christian is really an affront to Christ himself (8:12), and most certainly when he says that an act performed in isolation may be insignificant and harmless in one's own eyes, but as a social act it can become intensely meaningful (10:16–30).²⁶

The church as it reflects or bears more and more the holiness of Christ to one another and to those who are unbelievers and may congregate or socialize with them, can also carry the potency of a sanctifying influence that causes others to want to pursue a relationship with the Holy One:

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:15–18).

In the Gingrich New Testament Lexicon, we find the Greek term, *avforizw*, meaning to "set apart, take away, separate, exclude" (Matthew 13:49, 25:32; Luke 6:22; Acts 19:9; 2 Corinthians 6:17; Galatians. 2:12).²⁷ Again, there is distinct call for the people to separate themselves in conduct and testimony in life. Furthermore, we see the inclusion of holiness as it relates not only to the person, but to the people as a whole. This is pointed out later on in this text in verse 16 by the reference to "my people."

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The church is made up of those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy ones or 'saints' (1 Corinthians 1:2). In essence, Peter was reminding them in the midst of their persecution that they were being built into an edifice by God through Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"(1 Peter 2:5 ASV). Christians are "holy brothers" (Hebrews 3:1), a "holy temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:17; Ephesians 2:21), purged vessels of honor "made holy for the Master's use" and ready for every good work (2 Timothy 2:12).

²⁶ J. Ayodejo Adewuya. *Holiness and Community*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2003, page185.

²⁷ Gingrich New Testament Lexicon: Parsons Technology: (Electronic Edition, STEP Files), 2007, Page31.

As a corporate body or church, we cannot ignore our collective privilege and duty to stand out as lights in darkness. When Christians have a mutual testimony that gives harmonious praise to God, His holiness is exalted and held out as a virtue that attracts those who see so little of it in families, groups and religious sects today. On the opposite hand, this kind of holy unity and passion for righteous living cannot be forced by legalistic rulings or coercion that will lack spiritual appeal to unbelievers already facing militant cults and other carnal religions who try to force adherents into a rigid set of rules. Rather, corporate sanctification must come from sincere Christians who want to please God by offering up spiritual sacrifices. In truth, only a genuine and voluntary passion for holiness within a church can attract sincere seekers looking for a better way to live.

Missional Sanctification

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17 NASB).

In John ‘sanctification’ has the broader meaning of separation and particularly separation for mission.²⁸ The means for this being accomplished is the truth. Jesus is this truth (John 14:6). This truth comes through the work of the Holy Spirit (16:13) who makes the truth of Jesus come alive in the hearts of disciples.

Therefore, we must address ‘missional sanctification’ since it is critically important to Jesus Christ. All that He has sanctified and continues to sanctify is not only for their betterment and development as Christians, but His sanctifying Spirit continues to help us to be a testimony of the power of the Sanctifier. Nothing has so impacted the various peoples and nations over the span of the ages like the holy work of Christ Jesus in the believers. In the first century, as they beheld the faith of Christians, as well as the radical change in the character and life of these new believers, people were swayed by the holy lives of these men and women that glorified their holy God. The same missional sanctification is needed in the church today so that Christians can evangelize their communities where they need to see the image of Christ lived openly. If we live with this kind of passion to pursue a holy God, men “will see and glorify the Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

‘Missional sanctification’ is a glorious subsequent blessing of corporate sanctification. This spiritual outgrowth of holiness emphasizes the relationship and responsibility the church is to have to the global community. The church is God’s gift to the world, and therefore she is called to reach it. Here, we are to reflect God’s glory before the lost, and to participate in calling people to a relationship with Him. As a “royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9), the church must be engaged in vital witnessing experiences with the lost as we draw closer to the imminent return of Christ.

²⁸ D. A. Carson. *The Gospel according to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans (Inter-Varsity Press), 1991, Page 565.

Biblical Understanding of Holiness

Definition of Sin

In his classic work, *A Right Conception of Sin*, Richard S. Taylor argues that, “Any doctrine that relates to sin, is affected by our understanding and definition of sin. Most errors in theology can usually find their roots in a defective definition of sin.”²⁹ All unrighteousness is sin. That is, whatever is not of righteousness—by commission or omission—is sin. Sin is both a condition and an act of transgression against the law of God, nature, or society.

Since sin entered the world, sin has become universal, “All have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Thus man is depraved—in fact, totally depraved. Notwithstanding modernism and the dressings of language and phraseology, we cannot afford to see sin from the standpoint of modern culture and modernism. The one and only right perspective to viewing sin is from the standpoint of God. That is, how does God see sin? It is only by a right perception of sin, its corruption, its smears, and heinous nature that we may correctly extol Jesus Christ who offered Himself for the salvation of humanity.

Sin entered mankind through Adam, and became universal resulting in spiritual death first, and then physical death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23). All men are born in sin (Psalm 51:1–5), but not born to sin (Romans 6:16). Total depravity, means that man’s will, intellect, and emotions are corrupted by sin. By total depravity, we mean totally lost, which does not mean that there is nothing good at all in man—for man yet bears some signs and evidences of his original good and dignity before ‘the Fall’. Thus, the very principle of sin is unbelief in the Word of God and will lead to a process of gradual decline or deterioration from God’s divine will and purpose for humankind!

Jesus Christ took on human nature so He could die. His death on the cross was our death (Romans 6:23). He died in our stead. God took the initiative for our redemption when He provided the suitable and perfect sacrifice in the person of His begotten son, Jesus; who alone is the complete satisfaction to His justice. This is in full demonstration of God’s love for man (John 3:16). God did not stop at the provision for the complete atonement for sin in Jesus; He continues to give the full benefits of that atonement by Himself through His grace and by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “as many as believe Him to them gives He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12 ASV).

Sin is generally seen as a two-fold concept. The first aspect is seen in Psalm 51:5, “In sin did my mother conceive me.” The other is seen in 1 John 3:8, “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” The text from the salter refers to a nature that comes with birth. This is often referred to as original sin, inherited sin, total depravity or fallen nature. But, the text in 1 John refers to the act of committing sins—also referred to as actual sin. Oftentimes, there can be some difficulty in ascertaining whether a biblical passage is referring to sin as a state or sin as an act.

The aspect of theology that deals with the issue of sin is known as hamartiology and is inextricably bound to soteriology, which includes the doctrine of salvation and the resultant doctrines of justification and sanctification. Justification is the declarative act of God wherein the sinner is declared righteous. This is known as imputed righteousness. Paul’s exposition on sin in chapters 5 and 6 of the letter to the Romans is helpful in understanding the pervasive effects of sin on humanity as well as humanity’s proper response. Paul repeatedly makes the point that the first man’s sin resulted in humanity’s participation in all the effects of sin (Romans 5:12; 17–19). Consequently,

²⁹ Richard S. Taylor. *A Right Conception of Sin*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1945, page 9.

all humanity is born with this inherited, sinful nature. It is also from this understanding that the doctrine of original sin emerged.

As it relates to sanctification, the doctrine of original sin becomes critical in understanding the salvific role of this work of grace. In *Five Views on Sanctification*, Melvin Dieter writes, “A central point in any theology is its accepted position on the nature of the human situation. One’s doctrine of original sin is arguably as determinative a concept as any other for one’s view of sanctification.”³⁰

Although the doctrine of original sin was somewhat developed before the time of Augustine, it found its most significant development in Augustine’s work. Augustine believed that through Adam’s sin, “the entire mass of our nature was ruined and fell into the possession of its destroyer. And from him no one—no not one has been delivered, or will ever be delivered, except by the grace of the Redeemer.”³¹ It was the doctrine of original sin and the resultant doctrine of total human depravity that produced some of the fertile ground for the later doctrine of entire sanctification.

History of Holiness and Sanctification

Any attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the biblical doctrines of holiness and sanctification must include an investigation of the historical developments and understandings throughout the history of the church. There are many direct and indirect sources that detail the continued efforts of the church to interpret the canon of Scripture as it relates to holiness and to accurately apply these understandings to the life of the church. These sources include the writings of and references to many of the early church fathers. In addition, the writings of Augustine and the later Reformers are of equal importance. More contemporary sources include studies of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. (Note: For further study on these early church fathers and later movements and their effect on the doctrine of holiness/sanctification, please refer to the original 2012 BDP study document “The Pursuit of the Holy God.”)

Common Understandings of Sanctification/Holiness

It was John Wesley who has addressed sanctification and holiness by writing an abundance of sermons on the subject. In one such sermon, he enlarges on the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying process. This is a lengthy citation of his writing, but beneficial:

If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is brought in the soul by what is frequently termed natural conscience, but more properly, preventing grace;—all the drawings of the Father; the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more;—all that light wherewith the Son of God “enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world”; showing every man “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God”;—all the convictions which His Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man; although, it is true, the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible, and after a while forget, or at least deny, that they ever had them at all.

³⁰ Melvin E. Dieter. *Ibid*, page 21.

³¹ Kenneth S. LaTourette. *A History of Christianity* (Volume 1). San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1975, page 178.

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: There is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel “the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”; producing, love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing, the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into the mind which was in Christ Jesus.

How naturally do those who experience such a change imagine that all sin is gone; that it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein! How easily do they draw that inference, “I feel no sin; therefore, I have none: It does not stir; therefore, it does not exist: It has no motion; therefore, it has no being!”

But it is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return, and sin revives; showing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other; “the flesh lusting against the Spirit”; nature opposing the grace of God. They cannot deny, that, although they still feel power to believe in Christ and to love God; and although his “Spirit” still “witnesses with their spirits, that they are children of God”; yet they feel in themselves sometimes pride or self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently stirring in their heart, though not, conquering; yea, perhaps, “thrusting sore at them that they may fall”; but the Lord is their help.

From the time of our being born again, the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled “by the Spirit” to “mortify the deeds of the body,” of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to “abstain from all appearance of evil,” and are “zealous of good works,” as we have opportunity, doing good to all men; while we walk in all His ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.³²

Although Wesley shared many other thoughts in this sermon, his inclusion of the Holy Spirit is critical to our understanding of the pursuit of holiness. For many, the lack of understanding and accepting the role of the Holy Spirit in holiness has left them without the catalyst and we need this constant guidance of the Third Person of the Trinity. It has been thoughtfully expressed that:

To relate rightly to God—that is, to know and to follow God—required a progressive transformative development. Participation in the Pentecostal worship and witness over time produced an “effective” transformation in which lives

³² John Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” John Wesley Sermon Collection: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2008, Quick Verse. Excerpts from Pages 1–2.

were formed and shaped by their experience of God...The Spirit would lead into righteousness. The Spirit would search the heart and, by the Word, point out what was not like Christ and therefore carnal. The Spirit would fill and lead in powerful witness. The Spirit would express himself through gifts and fruit that are producing a divine character being formed in the believer by virtue of participation in the divine life. The Father, Son, and Spirit, by the Spirit, came to take up abode in the believer.³³

Presuppositions in the Past COGOP Formation

As we examine the Scriptures, we must keep in focus the pursuit of holiness intertwined throughout the pages of both the Old and New Testaments. Our past presuppositions in the Church of God of Prophecy (hereafter noted as COGOP), and other similar denominations was influenced by the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century. While this movement swept through Wales, Scotland, England, and the United States with positive spiritual revival, it also carried some scriptural misinterpretations that altered some of the original teachings of John Wesley and James Arminius. Phrases such as “entire sanctification,” “instantaneous sanctification” and “sinless perfection” began to imbed themselves with new meanings into the movement and influenced church beliefs and doctrinal interpretations. Our faithful movement corporately embraced these doctrines and strived with all sincerity to live out the implications in and through their lifestyles. Many attribute the rapid growth and global advancement of the church, in this period of its journey, to its unified approach to corporate sanctification and pursuit of holiness. Even though these coined phrases carried with them some incorrect inferences that affected most Pentecostal churches, it did not hinder the church in its focused drive to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Although some of the church’s earlier literature emphasized an instantaneous experience that was a one-time event, there is evidence to support that these did not greatly impact the church in pursuit of its mission.³⁴ Whilst, these two documents give only some scriptural verses relating to sanctification and very little on the ongoing process of holiness the reality for many was an inward desire to be in the image of Christ. It has been said that a church’s hymnology reflects its theology. Songs and hymns like “Down at the Cross” (Elisha Hoffman, 1904), of that period would then reflect our implied and unwritten theology. (“Oh precious fountain that saves from sin, I am so glad I have entered in; there Jesus saves me and keeps me clean; glory to his name”). In the same manner, the Holy Spirit is mentioned only as the third experience, but no reference is made to the role of the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification or the need of the Spirit to continue to impassion a believer to seek further sanctifying grace throughout their Christian lifetime. The omission of these key components by other nineteenth century pioneers of the Holiness movement was considered proof positive. The unintentional exclusion of several passages of Scripture on maturing in holiness promoted the thinking among some that once they were sanctified, there was no need for a growing experience with God after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whilst others reflected a strong urge to pursue after God.

³³ Steven J. Land. *Pentecostal Spirituality*. Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, England, 2001, Page 130.

³⁴ A. J. Tomlinson. *Sanctification A Second Work of Grace and Sanctification A Peculiar Treasure*. White Wing Publishing House: Cleveland, TN, undated tract.

In spite of this passion on the initial sanctification experience, there were exceptions that indicated a need to allow the Holy Spirit to continue this pursuit of holiness. In the tract *Sanctification a Second Work of Grace*, A. J. Tomlinson states that “sanctification as a definite work of grace subsequent to regeneration should be desired by everybody” (page 2). Even though Tomlinson stated that sanctification is a definite work of grace, he did not hold to the idea of ‘once sanctified, always sanctified.’ In this same tract he said:

In order to obtain this experience, the believer puts himself at once—or by one act of faith—into the cleansing stream and is immediately made clean. *He then continues in that stream*, or continues faithful, and is kept clean. Purity is retained on the same condition that it is obtained; and to *keep under the cleansing wave* is to be faithful to the conditions of purity. Jesus expressed the continual cleansing by the figure of “abiding in the vine” (italics added for emphasis).³⁵

The Normative and the Exception

Sanctification, whether in the initial experience in a believer’s life or in the ongoing growth within a Christian’s life, may not always take place in the same manner as it has in the life of others. With God, the normative does not exclude the exception since God is not only Creator but the One who recreates. In 2 Corinthians 10:7, Paul answering those who questioned his calling and experience with Christ, gave this profound truth: “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ’s, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s.” While Paul’s ministry and apostleship was drastically different from the other apostles like Peter and John, it was no less genuine because it was an exception from the norm. We see also in Acts 15:8, 9 the same observation by Peter who in retelling the events in Cornelius household, points out this exception that radically differed from what he and others saw and heard on Pentecost. He says, “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” The manner and outward manifestations that appeared on Pentecost became the exception (fire setting on each believers’ head, rushing mighty wind and speaking in other known languages), rather than the norm that is found in the rest of the Book of Acts and even in our churches today.

Having examined how the exception to the norm works in other places in the Bible, the experience of initial sanctification does not always occur in believers in the same way. In fact, the story of A. J. Tomlinson’s experience of sanctification (refer to the original 2012 BDP study document, “The Pursuit of the Holy God.”), as well as many others testimonies, are without question an exception to what thousands of others have experienced as they have sought and received an initial sanctification that helped usher them into an ongoing cleansing, a growing relationship that stimulates the heart to pursue holiness. We must respect this truth of the norm and exception because our Creator God is still recreating in the hearts and lives of Christians today.

³⁵ A. J. Tomlinson, *Ibid.*

Culture and Holiness

One of the tensions that exist within the Holiness movement is recognizing the influence of culture while maintaining the integrity of the message of holiness. Undoubtedly, the holiness message will intersect with culture because humans are beings that are shaped within a particular cultural context. The challenge is how to mediate the holiness message in ways that are relevant while at the same time not losing the integrity of the message. One of the questions we must ask is, “How do we engage cultures and subcultures in ways that are relevant and that embody the power of the holiness message to achieve transformation of lives?” Similarly, we must ask, “What would holiness look like for a church in different socio-economic and political contexts as well as in other cultures who accept the message of the Gospel?”

For instance, the cultural view of sanctification in the African culture comes from a different point of view than that of Western culture. Holiness is not a strange word or doctrine in Africa and in African religion. Many deities and gods are worshipped in traditional African religion. As a matter of fact there are gods of almost everything and every endeavor—god of trade, god of war, god of harvest, god of marriage/fertility, god of iron, god of safety and so on and so forth. There are also deities in lands and territories, to which total oversight of that land or territory is submitted, thus “god of our land.”³⁶

In fact, some people who are ardent followers to African traditional religion say that since the coming of the Christian religion and its attendant ‘civilization’ in our society and communities, evil and sin has aggravated. Adultery, fornication, robbery, indecency, kidnapping, genocides, political wars, and such vices are rampant and on the increase. The point being made here is not that Christianity has absolutely brought vices and/or woes, but that Christianity not lived out fully is an aberration, a license to moral decadence and licentiousness. Paul warned against using Christian liberty as an occasion to commit sins: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13 [note also James 1:25, 1 Peter 2:16]). To this then, we dare say that to bring back on the radar of spirituality in our culture, consecration and holiness is not only a great welcome but a revival and restoration of values and accreditation of virtues with which we can readily identify and associate. Cognizant of the fact that culture affects the holiness message and churches because man is a socially shaped being, the challenge is how best to appropriate biblical holiness in an African cultural milieu that has become very much influenced by western modernism and postmodernism. Culture challenges us to mediate holiness in ways that are relevant and transforming without losing the integrity of the message.

Culture often played a significant role in how the moral imperatives were understood and applied. Often, the cultural distinctives of the first century which produced the particular tensions within the first century believers are not easily translated into contemporary contexts. Therefore, the distinctive moral-ethical demands relating to Christians have required some re-interpretation throughout the history of the church, especially as it relates to the doctrine of holiness. This is especially true regarding ‘external distinctives’ such as apparel, adornment, and secular activities.

³⁶ James Kolawole. Observations shared with the BDP in consultation with Bishop Kolawole from Nigeria.

Chapter 19 of Leviticus deals primarily with holiness in social ethics. The chapter begins with the divine declaration, “. . . Be ye holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (v. 1 NIV). The chapter defines and describes holiness in all areas of life. The following quote captures the spirit in this section of the Holiness Code:

Holiness stands as the foundational principle in the long list of precepts set forth in this chapter. Holiness is the object of all of the moral and ceremonial law. But since God sets the norm and defines just what holiness does and does not include, God’s holiness acts both as model and as motivating force in the development and maintenance of a holy character. To make sure that the point is not lost, fifteen times the sixteen subsections end with the reminder that, “I am the Lord your God.”³⁷

It is obvious that many of the culture-specific injunctions of Leviticus cannot be translated into contemporary social conditions and therefore necessitates some cultural reinterpretation in order to maintain the relevancy of the principles to contemporary readers as well as those whom they were originally presented.

The Holiness and Pentecostal movements were birthed out of an American “cultural cradle” and thus reflected a culturally distinct view of the social aspects of personal holiness. This culturally distinct view produced certain prohibitions that were targeted against some of the pervasive social ills. Similarly, the position of women in society during this time informed some of the doctrinal positions as well. Many of the prohibitions which became part and parcel of holiness doctrine in America and other Western cultures reveal little or no relevance when placed in different cultural contexts around the globe. Social issues such as apparel, adornment, social activities, and others are sensitive issues that are inextricably bound to culture and may not have identical applications in relation to defining holiness.

The obvious challenge faced when holiness and culture are juxtaposed is coming to some determination of the “necessary things” (see Acts 15:28) of holiness, regardless of culture, while avoiding perceptions that the decisions are simply the result of some kind of ‘cultural compromise.’

Acts chapter 15 is considered to be a watershed event in the book of Acts. In this chapter, the Lucan account provides the narrative surrounding the events of the so called Jerusalem Council. Although this narrative is usually interpreted in a soteriological context, there is a salient sociological context with accompanying cultural implications. The cultural aspects dealt with whether or not it was necessary for the Gentiles to observe the Jewish cultural observances—many of which were inextricably bound to their identity as God’s holy people.

The consensus of the council (“it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us”) was to recognize the ‘cultural specificity’ of the Gospel message in certain social contexts. Consequently, they were careful to identify certain non-negotiable elements (“necessary things”- KJV, “essentials”- NRSV) that were required to live holy lives regardless of the cultural context. It is the identification of the ‘non-negotiables’ for their day in contrast to the cultural-specific ‘negotiable’ elements that will aid in dealing with the tension that exists in maintaining the holiness standard in a culturally diverse Christian context.

³⁷ Walter C. Kaiser. *New Interpreters Bible (Volume 1)*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994, page 1131.

Dynamics between Personal and Corporate Sanctification

Although the personal aspect of sanctification is usually the most emphasized aspect, the corporate aspect (refer to the original 2012 BDP study document on “The Pursuit of the Holy God.”) is equally important in God’s salvific work in the world. The call to holiness both includes and transcends the individual response to the work of grace. Personal sanctification deals primarily with the experience and expression of sanctification in the area of personal ethics and morality while corporate sanctification involves the interaction of the entire community of faith.

In the New Testament all believers were called saints or ‘holy ones.’ Eventually saintliness or holiness was only selectively ascribed to a few living Christians or those who had suffered or became martyrs. This shift became a “narrowing from the witness of all members down to the extraordinary achievement of a few.”³⁸

Personal holiness lost the force it had as a catalyst for the propagation of the Gospel. Consequently, holiness was relegated to the realm of the clergy under the close control of the church. The responsibility of personal holiness was mediated through the system of penance. McClendon writes:

The elevation of some church members to distinctive roles of holiness, to sainthood, implied that not all were saints, and before A.D. 1000 it appeared that there were two Christian paths to heaven, a superior path taken by the saints, the way of the perfect, and an inferior path for ordinary Christians – the practice of penance.³⁹

The quest for personal holiness is a pursuit that unites the believer with God in a transformative relationship. The following terms are important in the understanding of personal holiness:

Consecration is a volunteer surrender, an act by man to separate himself to God. It is more than surrendering something, whether it is money, or job, or whatever, to God. It is the surrender of the self and all its appurtenances to Him. It is a choice to be separate to God no matter the cost. Although it is an offering or surrender of the self to Him, it also involves His acceptance of the offering: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, **acceptable** unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1 bold letters added for emphasis). Those who desire to be holy must and will separate themselves in pursuit of God from the majority who are satisfied with a deistic existence at best. The pursuit of God and His holiness necessitates that we refuse to let the majority determine and shape our standard or pursuit of God. Believers must pursue God and desire to see what God shows, hear what God says, and be where God sends: “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved” (Habakkuk 2:1).

Sanctification is subsequent to regeneration. Note: This does not imply a timeline or chronological order as if these could not happen in some people as a simultaneous event; at least in the experience of initial sanctification. Regeneration is the impartation of spiritual life to a previously dead, albeit spiritual, individual. Sanctification is the cleansing of the individual from the pollution of inbred sin. Sanctification is received by faith that imparts a desire to live a dedicated life of consecration and a pursuit of right living. The evidence of sanctification is holiness, because sin is abolished by the blood of Jesus in the life of the sanctified person (Hebrews 9:22; Revelation 1:15).

³⁸ James W. McClendon. *Systematic Theology (Volume 1 – Ethics)*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002, page 56.

³⁹ *Ibid*, page 58.

Holiness is the attitude of agreeing and confessing what God upholds in words and judgment; the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment: that is, hating what He hates and loving what He loves and so measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.

A holy man will endeavor to shun every known sin and to keep every known commandment. He will have a mind fixed on God, a hearty desire to do His will, a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love to all the ways of God. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22); and what David felt when he said, "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128). A holy man will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. He will not only live the life of faith in Him and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also labor to have the mind that was in Him, and to be "conformed to His image" (Romans 8:29). It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us; to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not Himself; to walk in love, even as Christ loved us; to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself. He will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth; that He came not to do His own will; that it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will; that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others; that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults; that He thought more of godly poor men than of kings; that He was full of love and compassion to sinners; that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin; that He sought not the praise of men, when He might have had it; that He went about doing good; that He was separate from worldly people; that He continued instant in prayer; that He would not let even His nearest relations stand in His way when God's work was to be done. These things a holy man will try to remember. By them he will endeavor to shape his course in life. He will take to heart the saying of John, "He that saith he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6); and the saying of Peter that, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Happy is he who has learned to make Christ his ALL, both for salvation and example! Much time would be saved and much sin prevented if men would oftener ask themselves the question, "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?"

The concept of corporate holiness is found in the fact that holiness cannot be limited to only the personal (individual) relationship with God, but it also incorporates the relationship with people in the context of corporate bodies (i.e. organizations, nations, or families). Dieter writes, "As we grow closer to Christ, we grow closer to each other. We are sanctified through fellowship with those who are in Christ with us."⁴⁰ This concept is initially seen in Israel's relationship with God. After the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, God established a covenant with them in the wilderness (Exodus 19:3-6).

Israel's holiness was established based on their obedience to the word that God had spoken. The corporate holiness was to be exhibited in the requirements for a social holiness which prescribed the responsibility of the nation to issues such as justice and equality as seen throughout the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic writings. On the other hand, in being the ultimate sacrifice

⁴⁰ Melvin E. Dieter. *Ibid*, page 64.

and sanctifier of God's people, Jesus was crucified outside of the city gate, that is, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Christ's church must even more so now bear the true marks of God's holiness; for Christ is not coming back for a suffocating, wasting, polluted, and sick church; rather He is coming back for a going, doing, prevailing, vibrant, and holy (without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish) church, His body.

In the New Testament, Peter picks up the corporate theme in 1 Peter 2: 9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an **holy nation**. . ." Peter's focus on holiness in the corporate context again underscores the fact that holiness transcends individual responsibility and identity. One of the more contemporary metaphors for the church is that of a community of faith. As we reflect on this ecclesial understanding, we are forced to consider the issue of holiness in this context. One question that is engendered by this consideration is, "How do we relevantly define holiness within the context of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural community whose members are trying to live out their faith in the world?"

Vital Nature of Prayer and Holiness

"To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love."⁴¹ This quote by A.W. Tozer underscores the continuous nature of the pursuit of holiness. Holiness is not a static state, but it is a dynamic relationship with God that requires constant interaction with God's grace. One of the catalysts of this dynamic relationship is prayer. In his groundbreaking work on prayer, E.M. Bounds wrote:

Prayer is related to all the gifts of grace. Its relationship to character and conduct is that of a helper. Prayer helps to establish character and to fashion conduct. Both, for their successful continuance, depend on prayer. There may be a certain degree of moral character and conduct independent of prayer, but there cannot be any distinctive religious character and Christian conduct without it. Prayer helps where all other aids fail. The more we pray, the better we are, and the purer and better our lives become.⁴²

Prayer, without a doubt, is the quintessential element in the pursuit of holiness. When we understand that holiness is more than a state, but a dynamic relationship, we will also understand that it is the relationship that produces and maintains the life of holiness. There is a certain irony in the fact that while prayer purifies the heart, a pure heart empowers the life of prayer. Prayer both fulfills the desire for holiness and at the same time recreates and fuels the desire. It is from this creative tension that emerges the "hunger and thirst for righteousness." Undoubtedly, this is why the Bible, especially the New Testament, consistently emphasized the need for prayer in the life of believers.

The Holiness movement was a movement grounded in prayer. The history of the movement shows a total dependence on prayer to effectuate the grace of God in their lives. Their rejection of human efforts in relation to what God was doing in their lives became the foundation for much of their doctrinal formulations. The Pentecostal movement also grounded the experience of the Spirit

⁴¹ A.W. Tozer. *The Pursuit of God*. Philadelphia, PA: Christian Publications, 1982, page 14.

⁴² E. M. Bounds. *Prayer*. Philadelphia, PA: Whitaker House, 1997, page 148.

in the life of prayer. The narratives in the book of Acts of the Apostles underscores the role of the Spirit in prayer as the early church sought to pursue the holiness modeled by Jesus.

Initial Sanctification/Ongoing Sanctification

Several Pentecostal scholars have alluded to this departure from the more accurate and full definitions given by John Wesley and other holiness preachers. We see this revealed by comments like:

Where the Wesleyan-Arminian teaching stresses the crisis aspect of sanctification to the neglect of the post-sanctification development and problems, the Keswickian (later Calvinistic ministers) tends to stress either the separation aspect (distinction between nature and grace and the conflict between them) or the growth aspect, to the neglect of the critical crisis aspect...the Scriptures to which both cling hold both crisis and process in creative unity and encourage deep involvement in life.⁴³

Furthermore, we read the following observation made after examining those phrases instantaneous sanctification and entire sanctification:

Righteousness speaks of the ordering of all of life according to the will of God. It describes the structure, limits and contours of that relationship. There can be no peace with God and no true joy without righteousness. But righteousness will never be perfectly realized in this world because of human fallibility and worldly rebellion. The interim fulfillment of the Law and thus of all righteousness is love...The awareness of this struggle, the vigilance, consecration and the travail of praying through to peace, all contribute to the compassionate drive of Pentecostals toward the world; their neighbors are not only transgressors, but also, like themselves, are defiled and inwardly alienated from the life of holiness and happiness. This peace borne of perfect love and reverence is a moment-by-moment abiding in Christ through the Spirit and the Word.⁴⁴

Therefore, the pursuit of holiness should always be the focus rather than theoretical phrases that can often be misleading and discouraging to the believer who desires to walk holy before God. It was Paul, the most theological of apostles, who teaches the followers of Jesus Christ by his own admission:

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were

⁴³ Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology*. Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 1967, Page 107.

⁴⁴ Steven J. Land. *Pentecostal Spirituality*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, Page 176.

already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:9–14).

More Biblical Explorations of Sanctification/Holiness

It is true that we are caught up into a unique relationship as newborn creatures in Christ Jesus. Within the Bible there are pivotal truths that are essential to a believer’s understanding and growth. These include two concepts that we cannot ignore: 1) the truths related to our salvation, including what God has already done for us, and yet what He will still do; and, 2) the imperatives that reveal how we as Christians should live as a consequence of His ongoing work of sanctification. The beginning point of sanctification is our belief in salvation—that believes what God has done for us in salvation. Therefore, our relationship entails what He has done in the past and what He will yet do for us in the future. Both require an infusion of the Holy Spirit to open for us the way that we should walk. A voice that came out of the nineteenth century Holiness movement fire, Horatius Bonar, wrote so applicably:

The gospel does not command us to do anything in order to obtain life, but it bids us live by that which another has done; and the knowledge of its life-giving truth is not labor but rest—rest of soul, which is the root of all true labor, but we rest in order to work.⁴⁵

In reality, our sanctification is reliant upon believing the truth of “who we are in Christ,” trusting in His finished work at Calvary, and then living out through the help of the Spirit the implications of this new standing in Christ Jesus.

For many years, there has been too much contrasting of instantaneous sanctification against progressive sanctification. Instead, this misunderstanding can be better addressed by recognizing the need for both the initial crisis experience and for an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit that must be embraced in close association. As we move toward a more completely understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, we will not weaken the complete work of Jesus Christ, but will enlarge upon our understanding to see the Triune nature of God operating more perfectly through the continuing operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer from the moment of conversion until the final change has moved us from mortality to immortality (2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 53).

A little known book stated the beauty of this juxtaposition that takes place in the believer:

Our sanctification is dependent upon believing the truth of who we are in Christ, resting in His finished work, and then living out the implications of this new

⁴⁵ Bonar, Horatius. *God’s Way of Holiness*. New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers Publishing, 1865, Pages 41–42.

perspective... In actual practice, it is the dawning of this perspective which is the foundation for all practical sanctification. Hence Paul's emphasis on 'knowing' that this is the situation (Romans 6:3–9) leads to his summons to believers to 'count' themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11). Sanctification is therefore the consistent practical outworking of what it means to belong to the new creation in Christ... We believe that God's desire for us in the ongoing process of sanctification is for us to experience in real life who we really are in Christ. This necessitates choosing to believe who we are on a daily basis.⁴⁶

During the late nineteenth century, conflicts divided and hindered the pursuit of holiness and planted seeds of internal strife that crept deceptively into the powerful awakening to the moving of the Holy Spirit in the early years of the twentieth century. In fact, the transition to Pentecostalism that was birthed through the Holiness movement can continue to blossom in the twenty-first century if churches and theologians will pursue with passion both sanctification and holiness.⁴⁷ As in the crux of time that wedded the Holiness and Pentecostal movements together, our 'pursuit of holiness' must be initiated and cultivated by answering the call of the Holy Spirit that embraces both our initial need to be sanctified and the ongoing relational aspects of sanctification. This brings us to the powerful statement of Hebrews 10:14 that has both a positional and ongoing sense in the original language: "For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (NKJV). (Refer to the original 2012 BDP study document on "The Pursuit of the Holy God.")

Washing of the Blood/Water/Spirit

The image of Jesus Christ at Calvary informs us a great deal about the proper relationship of the believer through the suffering and mediated death of Christ on the cross. When the soldiers came to him and found the Savior dead on the cross, they did not break His legs as customary.

But without full comprehension that they were fulfilling Scripture, one of them took a spear and pierced his side from which flowed both blood and water (John 19:34). It is more than coincidental that the next verse (v. 35) records a remark that John is a witness to this particular action and that he reiterates this truth to cause others to believe. As one comes to understand the beauty of this symphonic act of divine provision, you will come to appreciate this vital illustration of how the work the Holy Spirit will perform this cleansing in our lives and usher us into a life of holiness. The Scriptures clearly follow this truth by giving evidence of the initial act of sanctification in the believer through the blood (Hebrews 13:12, Colossians 1:19, 20), yet gives ample witness to the ongoing work of sanctification through the Word of God (Ephesians 5:25, 26, Hebrews 10:19–22). Both of these are a glorious and harmonious act that will be continually played out through centuries in the life of every believer who looks upon Christ for the hope of holiness. As the Holy Spirit applies the shed blood of Jesus as the initial act of sanctification to bring us into good standing

⁴⁶ Neal Anderson and Robert L. Saucy. *The Common Made Holy*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997, 177.

⁴⁷ Synan, Vinson. *Spirit Empowered Christianity in the 21st Century*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House (Strang Co.), 2011, Pages 198–204.

with the Father through the Son, so will the Holy Spirit apply the “washing of the water by the word of God” (Ephesians 5:26) to continually sanctify the believer in Christ as an onward movement toward the Father. Since the word of God is always clean, it acts like the pure water that washes us holy before the Lord.

The Pastoral Call to Holiness

When the Holy Spirit moved upon Zacharias, he prophesied that God was visiting His people and sending a redeemer that we “. . . might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). The writer of Hebrews said that “. . . without holiness, no one would see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 NIV). From these and numerous other passages in the New Testament it is clear that holiness is an important doctrine regardless of the fact that many fear legalism on the one hand and fanaticism on the other anytime the subject is addressed. Nonetheless, even though the definition may be debated, the New Testament is clear that holiness is expected and required of all Christians.

Biblical holiness has to do with the inner character or condition of the human heart. Righteousness which is rooted in holiness has more to do with ‘right conduct’ in an ethical sense of uprightness. Any right conduct, which does not grow out of holiness, can be a form of legalism. For example, the Pharisees were meticulous about tithing the tiniest herbs (right conduct) but neglected the holiness of the heart. Thus Jesus condemned them for washing the outside of the cup while leaving the inside full of corruption. His imperative to them was to first clean the inside of the cup or the heart (holiness) so that the outside of the cup (righteousness) would be clean also. A person may behave exemplary in many ways and yet have a rotten heart. For example, a person may be outwardly faithful to his/her companion and be an adulterer in the heart. Such a person would not be living a holy life even though appearances suggest otherwise. Thus one can live uprightly and not be holy, but one can never be holy and not also live uprightly.

Therefore, we might add that holiness is not something that we humans can measure in one another because only God knows the heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Nor can we impose or force one another to obtain holiness. However, we can study the characteristics of holiness and encourage one another to hunger and thirst after it and thus to be filled.

The psalmist states of God in Psalm 51:6, “You desire truth in the inward parts” and then in a few more verses he says, “Purge me . . . wash me . . . create in me a clean heart, O God.” These verses tell us what God desires in us is “a clean heart” and that a pure heart is a work of God. It also suggests that our role in the pursuit of holiness is to allow the Spirit of God to show us where we are inwardly untruthful or conflicted. For example, a person may be inwardly jealous of another individual and fail to admit such a thing to himself or to God, let alone to anyone else. In fact, outwardly he/she may be very nice to that person, act kindly, and have only good things to say and, yet, be eaten up with inward jealousy. The God who desires truthfulness in the inward parts wants that individual to slow down and listen to Him in prayer so that He can reveal to him/her the cruel jealousy that has taken hold in his/her heart. Only then, after confession and repentance will God purge, wash, and cleanse that heart of jealousy.

As the leader of the local church it is the pastor’s (or pastoral team’s) responsibility to lead

his/her congregation in the pursuit of holiness. Holiness or a cleansing of the heart only occurs as one encounters the living God. Individuals and congregations do not become holy through preaching, teaching, or singing that is merely entertaining. Programs designed to attract people to our churches with no thought of seeking God does not lead to holiness of life. Paul says that we are changed or transformed into the holy image of God by the Spirit as we behold Him (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Therefore, the pastor must first seek God for his/her own transformation toward holiness. The pastor must spend large segments of unhurried time in vocal prayer, silence, solitude, meditating on Scripture, and self-reflection in allowing the Spirit to expose hidden sin and unholy attitudes in his/her heart. Then as God exposes ugliness in the pastor's heart, he/she can pray for forgiveness and ask for the sanctifying grace of God to wash his/her heart clean. Moses had to stand before God's burning bush on holy ground before he could lead the children of Israel to God's holy mountain.

From this newly sanctified ground of the heart, the pastor leads the congregation into God's presence. Therefore, when he/she preaches, it is not for informational purposes only. Now the preaching is for the purpose of causing the people to gaze upon the glory of the Lord in Scripture (glass, mirror—2 Corinthians 3:18) so that they are changed into the same image that they are beholding in those Scriptures. In this atmosphere and attitude, the pastoral prayer before or after the sermon is more than a religious exercise. The prayer is another opportunity to lift the congregation into God's presence. Visitation becomes more than just becoming better friends (though that is acceptable), but it takes on a weightier purpose. In other words, almost everything a pastor does (if starting from a heart of holiness) calls the church, the community, and the individual to holiness of life as well.

Recommendations

In light of the above affirmations of our need to pursue a holy relationship with God, we therefore recommend the following:

- 1) Every pastor, minister, or teacher is encouraged to guide people through ongoing teaching into seeking the sanctifying presence of God.
- 2) Every believer should be encouraged to pursue a lifelong walk in the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Every believer should desire to live in holiness through an active prayer life that engages the power of the Holy Spirit as an intricate part of a holy life.
- 4) Let us affirm the truth that our individual walk in the Spirit affects the corporate testimony of the church, either positive or negative.
- 5) Every believer should be encouraged in their pursuit of holiness to surrender their personal will to the active Lordship of Christ that His glorious life may be freely expressed through them (Galatians 2:20).

Respectfully submitted with prayer and gratefulness to God,

Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity:

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