

CHAPTER 7

Reigning Grace AND PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

SALVATION

JUSTIFICATION † **SANCTIFICATION** † GLORIFICATION

Patrick J. Griffiths @ 2009

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

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But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

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JUSTIFICATION + **SANCTIFICATION** + GLORIFICATION



REVIEW

In light of who we are in Christ, what does this look like in our daily lives? The question can only be answered as we consider the idea of, “Progressive Sanctification.” For many of us the idea or word “sanctification” appears foreign to our vocabulary. Yet it is a biblical word and one needing to be understood. There are many questions that surface when one begins to look at the idea of Progressive Sanctification. I have listed several.



QUESTIONS NEEDING TO BE ADDRESSED

- Is justification the work of one?
- What part does the believer play in their justification?
- Is sanctification the work of one?
- What part does the believer play in their sanctification?
- What is sanctification?
- In sanctification, does the believer become more holy?
- Can sanctification be separated from justification?
- Is it possible for the believer to stop their sanctification?
- Is it possible for the believer to increase their sanctification?
- What role does obedience play in sanctification?

Before embarking on the study, we must remind ourselves never to lose sight of Him. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Jesus Christ is our sanctification.

²⁶ “for consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God. ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Because this is true, the sanctified can never boast in themselves. Sanctification as an action is God working Himself in us and through us to those around us. **Sanctification as such is not about us, but Him.** It is essential that we never lose sight of this truth.

“In this realm [the realm of law and grace / supply and demand] *nothing* depends ultimately on man; *everything* depends on God. every desire for goodness and every act of obedience is graciously worked in the believer by God!”¹

Sinclair Ferguson in the work, *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* reinforces this fundamental truth with the following statement:

Union with Christ in his death and resurrection is the element of union which Paul most extensively expounds . . . if **we are united to Christ**, then we are united to him at all points of his activity on our behalf. We share in his death (we were baptized into his death), in his resurrection (we are resurrected with Christ), in his ascension (we have been raised with him), in his heavenly session (we sit with him in heavenly places, so that **our life is hidden with Christ in God**), and we will share in his promised return (when Christ, who is our life, appears, we also will appear with him in glory) (Rom. 6:14; Col. 2:11-12; 3:1-3).

This, then, is **the foundation of sanctification** in Reformed theology. **It is rooted**, not in humanity and their achievement of holiness or sanctification, but **in what God has done in Christ**, and for us in union with him. Rather than view Christians first and foremost in the microcosmic context of their own progress, the Reformed doctrine first of all sets them in the macrocosm of God's activity in redemptive history. It is seeing oneself in this context that enables the individual Christian to grow in true holiness.²

With this in mind, let us begin our study.

I. What is Biblical Sanctification?

Sanctification is one of those thousand dollar theological words that many use and few understand. We have misunderstood the idea of progressive sanctification as it relates to the individual. This has led to ask the question, "What is sanctification?" However, before we can answer the question we need to provide some **background material** so that the question can be asked in its proper theological context.

Salvation as an idea is broad, inclusive, and generic. We use it to describe what happens to an individual who trusts the finished work of Christ for their deliverance from sin's penalty and inauguration into the family of God. However, the umbrella term "salvation" has under it several very exact and definite ideas.



Biblical sanctification recognizes the fullness of God's work in behalf of His people as constant and unchanging. It speaks of who they are in Christ because of what He did in their behalf. There is nothing done by them to secure for them what only He could do. And nothing they do can change what is done. The New Testament describes sanctification (salvation) with three tenses: past, present, and future. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are often referred to as our . . .

- **Past Sanctification** (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10, 14, 29 [justification])

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, **to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus**, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: (1 Cor. 1:2)

- **Present Sanctification** (Rom. 6:19; 12:1-2 [sanctification]), and

19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, **so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**. (Rom. 6:19)

- **Perfect Sanctification** (Eph. 5:26-27 [glorification]).

26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that **He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless**. (Eph. 5:26, 27)

Our past sanctification speaks of our present perfect standing before the Father as we are in His Son. Our perfect future sanctification is what we will be **experientially** after the removal of our old nature. Our present progressive sanctification is the outworking of what we currently are in the context of our dual nature (i.e., old and new).

II. What is the Biblical idea of Salvation?

- Our past sanctification is called **justification**.

Justification is a judicial act whereby the believing sinner is

declared righteous by God because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to his account. What does this mean? Think of it in this way. When you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the saving of your soul, God the Father places into your bank account a sum of money that is inexhaustible. You did nothing to receive it, and you can do nothing to maintain it or exhaust it. It is yours. He gave it to you because of something His Son did for you. Any time you have a need, you can withdraw whatever amount is necessary and pay off the debt. In fact, you do not even have to make a withdrawal or write a check, it will automatically be done for you. This is the doctrine of justification. God has placed into your account the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. Any time an occasion exists that demands righteousness, His righteousness is offered as payment and the Father is satisfied. That is grace!

- Our future sanctification is called **glorification**.

Glorification is the culmination of a process that began with our justification (Rom. 8:30).

“29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Rom. 8:29, 30)

In our glorification, we will lose forever whatever remains of our old sin nature. Our future glorification is an affirming of God’s work in us and through us. God is completing that which He alone began. In that day, He will fulfill His promise to complete that which He started (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24)

- Our present sanctification is called **progressive sanctification**.

In between the beginning (our justification) and ending (our glorification), we have what is called **present, practical** or **progressive** sanctification. Either one of the previous three names are appropriate for the discussion. All three speak of something that is ongoing and now.

In considering our justification, sanctification, and glorification, it is important that we do not separate any one of the three from the other two. **Our salvation from start to finish is an indivisible whole.** This simply means **they cannot be separated.** To try and separate one from the other two will destroy the whole. No one is sanctified who is not first justified and no one justified can avoid sanctification. The outcome of such actions as justification and sanctification is the inevitable glorification.

That sanctification is positional is seen in passages like 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 6:11 where it is coupled with such words as “righteousness, redemption, washed, and justified.” It is for this reason true believers are identified by the name, “the sanctified” (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 2:11; 10:14; Jude 1).

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all **those who are sanctified**” (Acts 20:32)

It is put into effect at the time of the new birth and is an instantaneous gift. “Past sanctification results in a **holy position**, a position of sainthood.” Positional sanctification is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the application of Calvary’s blood sacrifice (Heb. 9:13, 14; 10:10; 13:12).

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13, 14)

My past sanctification deals once for all with the penalty of sin. Like other acts of salvation, sanctification is appropriated by the believing through faith (Acts 26:18).

That our positional and progressive sanctification are an act of the Holy Spirit is equally seen in passages such as 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2 and Romans 15:16. This, however, does not exclude the Father (“God of Peace” 1 Thess.

5:23; Jude 1). The instrument used by the Holy Spirit is the Word (John 17:17, 19; 1 Tim. 4:5). Present or progressive sanctification are effected in the daily experiences of the believer. Present sanctification deals with the power of sin and brings the believer toward perfection. It is certain (1 Thess. 5:24).

III. What is Progressive Sanctification?

Now let us come back to our original question, “What is **progressive** sanctification?” “Sanctification is applied justification.”³ Sanctification is becoming more like Christ. What is Christ-likeness? Christ-likeness is not getting more of Him, nor is it becoming more holy or godly as if to say we are actually becoming more holy in our essence. We are as holy now as the day we were saved; we are as holy now as we will ever be (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

In Christ Jesus, you have been made complete. Can you add to God’s completeness? Can you take away from God’s completeness? Are you ever going to get any more complete or any less complete?⁴

You can’t make yourself more holy than He has already made you.⁵

Paul, in a sense, had no more of Christ than the poor drunkard who only yesterday in some mission hall heard the Gospel, repented, believed, received Christ as his Saviour, and was born again.⁶

I am not saying that we work to change what we are, but work to believe what we already are.⁷

To think you are actually becoming more holy is a skewed understanding of the transforming process that is to be progressively taking place in every believer. Christ-likeness is simply showing the person of Christ to a greater degree moment by moment in our earthen vessels. Our **becoming** is only in the **displaying** of Him on the canvas of our life. Sanctification is the Lord Jesus manifesting Himself more and more through our jars of clay (2 Cor. 4:1-12). Progressive sanctification is the outworking of positional or past justification.

Christian growth is simply accepting what we have always been from the first day we accepted Christ.⁸

Remember that Christian growth is merely accepting what you have always had from the first day you gave your life to Christ.⁹

Listen also to J.C. Ryle in his work, *Holiness*,

When I speak of growth in grace, I do not for a moment mean that a believer's interest in Christ can grow. I do not mean that he can grow in safety, acceptance with God or security. I do not mean that he can ever be more justified, more pardoned, more forgiven, more at peace with God, than he is the first moment he believes. I hold firmly that the justification of a believer is a finished, perfect and complete work; and that the weakest saint, though he may not know and feel it, is as completely justified as the strongest. I hold firmly that our election, calling, and standing in Christ admit of no degrees, increase or diminution . . . I would go to the stake, God helping me, for the glorious truth, that in the matter of justification before God every believer is complete in Christ (Col. 2:10) . . .

. . . When I speak of a man growing in grace, I mean simply this — that his sense of sin is becoming deeper, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, his love more extensive, his spiritual-mindedness more marked. He feels more of the power of godliness in his own heart. He manifests more of it in his life. He is going on from strength to strength, from faith to faith, and from grace to grace¹⁰

We have the innate craving to boast in and of our flesh. We want to believe we did it our way and through our own abilities. We are like the child who shouts to their parents to show them he is swimming by kicking his legs furiously only to be holding himself up with his hands on the pool's bottom. Progressive sanctification is not about you, but God. Sanctification is what God is choosing to do in you and through you to those around you.

A.W. Pink says it very well in the following quote:

Just as the sinner's despair of any hope from himself is the first prerequisite of a sound conversion, so the loss of all confidence in himself is the first essential in the believer's growth in grace.¹¹

In sanctification, we must come to the end of ourselves.

IV. What Exactly Does the Word “Transformed” Mean (Rom. 12:2)?

The word *transformed* is our English word *metamorphosis*. It is used four times in the New Testament. Twice it is used with reference to our Lord’s transfiguration on Mt. Hermon (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). In addition, twice it is used of the believer being transformed or changed (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). It means, “To change into another form.”

“And was transfigured before them: and his face shone as the sun, and his garments became as white as light” (Matt. 17:2).

“Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them” (Mark 9:2).

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The change that took place in our Lord was not a change of essence but one of appearance. The transfiguration simply showed to others what was inside, what was already true. It was a reversal of the incarnation. The veil of flesh was lifted and they saw what He was like in His pre-incarnate state. So also is our sanctification. It is a change in appearance. It is not a change of essence. In regeneration, there is not a changing of the old, but a giving of the new. Moreover, it is this new that is endeavoring to be seen in our earthen vessels.

A synonym for *metamorphosis* is “metaschematizo.” It is used only five times in the New Testament. It means “to change the figure of.” Again, the idea is form, not essence. It is used of God’s enemies changing their appearance (2 Cor. 11:13-15) as well as the changing of the believer (Phil. 3:21).

“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13).

“No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

“Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (2 Cor. 11:15).

“Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21).

Neither one of the words are used to describe the change that will take place in our resurrection. Here the word is “allaso.” It simply means “to change one thing for another.” It is used in this way in all occurrences (Acts 6:14; Rom. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Gal. 4:20 and Heb. 1:12).

“For we have heard him say, that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:14).

“and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (Rom. 1:23).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of the eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

“but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you” (Gal. 4:20).

“And like a mantle You will roll them up; Like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end” (Heb. 1:12).

At the resurrection, the believer’s transformation will be complete. He will exchange the perishable for the imperishable. The old will be removed and the new will be manifested unhindered. At that moment “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

V. Revisiting the Idea of Progressive Sanctification

Reigning Grace and Progressive Sanctification

Salvation as a whole cannot be dichotomized and separated. Each part must be examined in light of the whole. When considering the area of justification, it must also include sanctification. The two, though distinct, are inseparably linked. This is equally true concerning the idea of progressive sanctification and perseverance. Strong says, "These two are but the divine and the human sides of the same fact."¹² If by this he means, "This is what God does and this is what I do," then I disagree. The sanctifying work of God in and through His people looks like perseverance. The whole action rests in the immutable activity of God.

I have chosen to list a series of statements from various writers to provide a backdrop for our current study. This will bring to light our study in its current understanding.

Progressive sanctification is the present outworking in and through our dual natures what is true of who we are in Him.

This is the subjective aspect of sanctification. This aspect has to do with conduct. All admonitions to godly living have reference to experiential sanctification, even though the word is not used.¹³

If our progressive sanctification is subjective and experiential, what chance do we have of evaluating the area accurately?

Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened.¹⁴

Sanctification is an ongoing transformation within a maintained consecration, and it engenders real righteousness within the frame of relational holiness.¹⁵

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.¹⁶

The basic meaning of sanctification is a separation unto God or a separation from evil, or the resultant state, the conduct befitting those who are thus set apart.¹⁷

VI. Key Elements in Understanding Progressive Sanctification

- Progressive Sanctification is the work of God.
- Progressive Sanctification is a continuous process whereby the new nature is manifested through the physical body in increasing conformity to the picture of Christ as seen in the New Testament command.

All of the following statements hit on something that is crucial to our understanding in this area. You are as sanctified now as you will ever be or have ever been.

Sanctification, in its primary usage in the Scripture, does not refer to improvement in practical holiness. We thus must conclude that it is an error to affirm that sanctification deals, primarily, with improvement in holiness.¹⁸

Sanctification does not “necessarily imply improvement in conduct, for God is said to be sanctified and to be holy, and He has always been infinitely that without charge.”¹⁹

Christians become increasingly Christlike as the moral profile of Jesus (the ‘fruit of the Spirit/obedience’) is progressively formed in them (2 Cor. 3:18, Gal. 4:19, 5:22-23). Paul’s use of *glory* in 2 Corinthians 3:18 shows that for him sanctification of character is glorification begun. Then the physical transformation that gives us a body like Christ’s, one that will match our totally transformed character and be a perfect means of expressing it, will be glorification completed (Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:49-53).²⁰

The divinely established means of Progressive Sanctification is through mind renewal (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). A result of mind renewal is the putting off/putting on process/fruit.

The agency through which God effects the sanctification of the believer is the indwelling Spirit of God.²¹

The mediate or instrumental cause of sanctification, as of justification, is faith.²²

The Holy Spirit renews the mind of His people with the Word of God through the exercising of faith.

VII. “What Part Do we Play in Our Sanctification” and

“Can we affect it by Way Of Impediment or Progression?”

The issue here is whether or not the idea of progressive sanctification is a monergistic act or a synergistic act? Before attempting to define the two ideas let us preface our thoughts by saying God’s work of sanctifying His people does not bypass their intellect, their volition or will, or their emotions or affections. God works in the individual in order that the individual is fully working toward the divinely established goal of complete glorification. Thus, “[man] is to be fully and consciously engaged in his sanctification.”²³ With this thought in mind, let us consider the two ideas of monergism and synergism.

- Monergism defined:

Monergism is a compound word literally meaning “one work.” A monergistic work is the work of one. Evangelicals believe initial salvation is the singular work of God. God works alone.

Even though initial salvation is considered a monergistic work, it still includes an expressed faith on the part of the individual as the agent or means of securing God’s provision. Yet, many within evangelicalism see the expressed faith as being sourced in God and energized by Him. In justification, neither the intellect, will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God is real and necessary.

- Synergism defined:

Synergism means “work with.” A synergistic work is the work of two. Unlike initial justification, most evangelicals view progressive sanctification as a synergistic work. A work whereby the believer *cooperates* with God and God works through the obedience of the individual for his sanctification.

In its simplest form monergism states that salvation is all from God, as opposed to synergism, which, in its simplest form, insists that God performs some action(s) leaving salvation incomplete until man performs some action(s) to complete salvation.²⁴

Without obedience or fruit of the Spirit, the individual would never be progressively sanctified. This raises the question as to whether or not obedience is optional or necessary. I will examine this idea thoroughly under the New Testament imperative, but

initially I would state that although obedience is not automatic, it is inevitable. By saying it is not automatic it is implied that God's sanctifying activity does not bypass the intellect, will, or affections of the individual. "Believers are thus both passive and active in their sanctification."²⁵ The issue I have with a synergistic sanctification is the division created between my justification and my sanctification. If "my" faith was not a synergistic work in my justification, why would "my" faith/obedience be a synergistic work in my sanctification? In sanctification, neither the intellect, will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God is real and necessary. Listen to the following authors and try to understand what they are saying.

Sanctification, however, is in one sense synergistic - it is an ongoing **cooperative** process in which regenerate persons, alive to God and freed from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:11, 14-18), are required to exert themselves in sustained obedience.²⁶

The Christian life **depends upon the believer** setting himself apart by an act of his will so that he is controlled by the Spirit of God. Experiential sanctification, then, **begins with the act of presenting oneself** unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and presenting oneself to control by the Spirit of God.²⁷

Though the weakest faith perfectly justifies, **the degree of sanctification is measured by the strength of the Christian's faith**, and the persistence with which he apprehends Christ in the various relations which the Scriptures declare him to sustain to us.²⁸

From the lack of persistence in using the means appointed for Christian growth - such as the word of God, prayer, association with other believers, and personal effort for the conversion of the ungodly [He left out giving {added}] - sanctification does not always proceed in regular and unbroken course, and it is never completed in this life.²⁹

Where are such thoughts found in the Word of God? Such thinking is bondage forming and guilt producing. What if I do not cooperate; will it still take place? How sure can my sanctification be if it depends on me? How much faith did it take to save you? How much faith does it take to sanctify you? Faith cannot sanctify. The object of faith sanctifies. Faith can only appropriate and appreciate what is already true.³⁰

Regardless as to whether or not one uses the word monergism or synergism for either justification or sanctification, the issue is on whom the emphasis is placed.

Now many persons have asked me if sanctification is monergistic in the same way regeneration is. I am rather hesitant to say yes because the term monergism is used in regeneration because God alone acts upon someone who is dead. We do not respond to become regenerated, but are regenerated in order to respond. A believer already has the Spirit indwelling so He is in fact responding to something God does in him. God still initiates and moves us to obedience but we actually act. One of the classic texts for sanctification is, “work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:12b, 13).³¹

Thus in justification and in sanctification, neither the intellect, will, nor affection of the individual are overlooked or bypassed by the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God is real and necessary, yet it is God who works both to will and to do according to His good pleasure and nothing man does or can do can stop God from finishing what He has begun.

VIII. The Means of Sanctification

Often we view the New Testament imperative/command as the means of achieving sanctification or measuring sanctification. This, however, is a misunderstanding of the imperative.

- Sanctification is said to be by God (1 Thess. 5:23, 24)
- Sanctification comes from union with Christ (1 Cor. 1:2)
- Sanctification comes by the Word of God (John 17:17)
- Sanctification comes through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood (Heb. 10:10; 13:12)
- Sanctification comes through faith (Acts 26:18)

The New Testament command is the outworking of something that is already true. The believer does not work for his sanctification; he is working from his sanctification (1 Cor. 5:7).

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7).

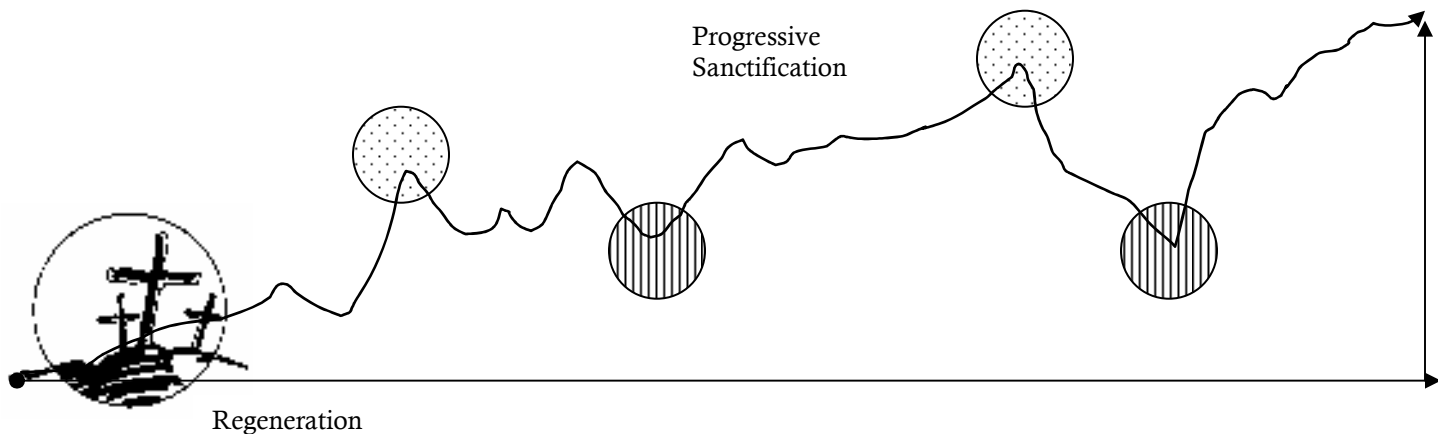
For the people of God, their justification, sanctification, and glorification are a sure work. God has rendered certain what He

alone determines (Rom. 8). God has never wasted one moment, event, decision, or energy. Thus, let us consider this idea.

- The sanctification of obedience
- The sanctification of disobedience

Often we see obedience as God's only means of sanctifying His people. I would like to suggest that disobedience is also working in us and through us the will of God for our sanctification.

I would also argue that it is when under the consequences of sin, whether because of our own sinful choices or just living in a fallen world, that we experience greater mind renewal. God is using our disobedience for our sanctification. Our disobedience is not a detour or rabbit trail, but a real and vital part of God executing His perfect will for the individual. Grace does not solicit one to sin or excuse or dismiss liability and responsibility. Sin's intrinsic demerit is significant enough to keep anyone in obedience. Consider the following chart.



1. Regeneration is salvation. It is a point in time event with ongoing, continuous consequences. This person is justified.
2. Progressive Sanctification is ongoing and continuous. It is the sure work of God in the life of His people. The question concerns the 'peaks' and the 'valleys.' Regardless as to how one might view those 'variants,' the line continues to climb. Thus, the variants are a part of progressive sanctification. What we cannot determine is if the 'peak' times of growth on the sanctification line are

- the actual ‘valleys’ of life that include our failures, disappointments, rebellion, and sin. And it cannot be determined whether or not the ‘valleys’ are those times when everything appears to be going right and we are falling back into ‘flesh’ reliance.
3. Glorification is the union of my justification and my sanctification.



CONCLUSION

God is working in us and through us, His perfect will. Every aspect of our lives is a reflection of a wise, gracious, and loving master artisan. Let us live our lives believing that He is finishing what He has completed. Let us see our obedience as a consequence of what is already true. Moreover, as always, let us continue to dance in the reign of grace!

Perhaps Jonathan Edwards stated it best with the following observation.

In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, *viz.* our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.³²

¹ Charles Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration* (Heart Cry Resources - www.heartcrymissionary.com, 2007), 120.

² Sinclair Ferguson, *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, Ed. Donald L. Alexander, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

³ “In sanctification, the believer is simply applying the implications of his or her justification.” *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Sanctification,” by Bradford A. Mullen, 713.

⁴ Bob George, *Faith That Pleases God*, (Eugene: Harvest House, 2001), 91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶ F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 16.

⁷ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (reprint ed., London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1956), 84, 85

¹¹ A.W. Pink.

¹² Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Outlines of Systematic Theology: Designed for the Use of Theological Students* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1908), 230.

¹³ Charles Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1971), 448.

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- ¹⁴ Strong, *Outlines of Systematic Theology*, 229
- ¹⁵ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1993), 169
- ¹⁶ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q.35
- ¹⁷ Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, 447.
- ¹⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 113.
- ¹⁹ Baker, *Dispensational Theology*, 448.
- ²⁰ Packer, *Concise Theology*, 170.
- ²¹ Strong, *Outlines of Systematic Theology*, 230
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 779. It is not my desire to align people in correctly with the author's position. However, Reymond's understanding of justification and sanctification is refreshing. In a cursory look at relevant sections reference is not made to the "sin - broken fellowship - confession - forgiveness" cycle.
- ²⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monergism>
- ²⁵ *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Sanctification," by K. Bockmuehl, 614.
- ²⁶ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 170.
- ²⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, 118.
- ²⁸ Strong, *Outlines of Systematic Theology*, 230.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ "Though God sanctifies by grace, human beings are responsible to appropriate God's grace by faith. Faith is 'the' means of sanctifying grace." *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Sanctification," 713.
- ³¹ John Hendryx, *Sanctification via Union with Christ*
http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/04/sanctification_via_union_with.php
- ³² *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, "Concerning Efficacious Grace," 2 vols. Reprint ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 2:557 [chapter 4, paragraph 64].