

God Our Savior and Sanctification in the New Testament

In this article we explore how God our Savior operates as the agent in sanctification—the process of God’s salvation to take us from being common, sinful, and worldly to being made God (the unique Holy One) in life and nature but not in His Godhead. For this, God takes the way of sanctification. On the one hand, sanctification is one of the steps in the progressing stage of God’s organic salvation; on the other hand, sanctification is a holding line encompassing all the steps of God’s salvation. Sanctification in God’s full salvation is carried out in three stages, including seven steps, which affect our tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body.

In the initial stage of sanctification the Spirit sanctifies us, seeking us out and causing us to repent so that we can be redeemed back to God and positionally sanctified. When we believe into Christ, our spirit is regenerated, and we begin to be dispositionally sanctified. In the ongoing, progressing stage of sanctification our soul is renewed, sanctified dispositionally, transformed, and conformed to His image through the impartation of God’s holy nature. In the consummate stage of sanctification our body is glorified (or transfigured, being conformed to the body of His glory), and we are fully sanctified, saturated with God’s holy nature. The means and goal of sanctification are by the blood of Christ shed on the cross, through the word of God, in the Holy Spirit, and in the church as the reality of the temple, with the believers functioning as priests of the gospel for the enlargement of God’s dwelling place on earth and with the goal of consummation in the holy city, New Jerusalem. We will first look at the meaning of Greek words related to sanctification and how they are used to indicate the Triune God as the agent of sanctification, the way of sanctification in these three stages and seven steps, and the means and goal of sanctification.

Words Denoting Sanctification

There are a number of Greek words that indicate sanctification or holiness, mostly from the root ἅγι-, which comes from τὸ ἁγός or ἅγιος, indicating awe or reverence, usually directed

toward a deity. The adjective ἅγιος (“holy”) occurs two hundred thirty-three times in the New Testament, mostly referring to God, the unique Holy One, things related to God, and whatever is made holy through the impartation of God’s holy nature (i.e., into the believers as the “saints,” or “holy ones”). There are two abstract nouns translated “holiness”: ἁγιότης, which occurs one time (Heb. 12:10), and ἁγιωσύνη, which occurs three times (Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thes. 3:13). The suffixes -οτης and -συνης both indicate the character and quality of being holy. The verb ἁγιάζω (“to sanctify,”

“to make holy,” “to cause to be holy”) occurs twenty-eight times in the New Testament, using three main tenses: the perfect tense, indicating the resultant state of the action of sanctification, especially referring to Christ’s work of sanctification; the present tense, indicating sanctification as an ongoing process, as it affects

the believers; and the aorist tense, looking at sanctification as a whole. The abstract noun ἁγιασμός (“sanctification”) with the -μός ending also indicates “sanctification as a whole,” without considering its constituent parts, and it occurs ten times.

The root ὅσι- also indicates holiness, with an additional sense of faithfulness or piety, especially when it translates the Hebrew root *hsd* (“lovingkindness,” “faithfulness”).¹ It occurs as an adjective ὅσιος (“holy”) eight times, as an abstract noun ὁσιότης (“holiness”), indicating character or quality, two times, and as an adverb ὁσίως (“holily,” “in a holy manner”) one time.

Two additional roots, ναός and ἱερός, also indicate holiness and imply the means to attain holiness and the goal of sanctification, to produce a mutual, holy dwelling place for God and humanity.

The noun ναός (“sanctuary”), coming from the verb ναίω (“inhabit”), usually refers to the enclosed part of the tabernacle or temple, consisting of two chambers—the Holy Place and the Holiest of all (Matt. 26:61)—or just to the innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies (27:51), which God inhabited and where God’s presence was.

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The adjective ἱερός (“set apart for the deity,” “sacred,” “consecrated,” “pertaining to God”) occurs twice, referring to the sacred things offered in the sacred temple (1 Cor. 9:13) and to the sacred writings or Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). From ἱερός comes the noun ἱερόν (“temple”), referring to the whole temple complex (Matt. 24:1), including the porticos (John 10:23), the courts (Matt. 21:12; Luke 2:37), and the enclosed sanctuary—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The adjective ἱερός is also the root of the Greek words for *priest* (ἱερεύς), *high priest* (ἀρχιερεύς), *priesthood* (ἱερωσύνη and ἱεράτευμα), *service as a priest* (ἱερατεύω and ἱερατεία), and *labor as a priest* (ἱερουργέω). It is even the beginning of the Greek name of Jerusalem (Ἱεροσόλυμα or Ἱερουσαλήμ),² as the holy city containing the holy temple, indicating the holy or sacred function of the priests and the city of Jerusalem (and the New Jerusalem) in the process of sanctification. In the Old Testament sense and in the New Testament sense, all the believers are priests who bring the holy God to people and who bring people to God to sanctify them and ultimately make them constituents of the holy city, New Jerusalem.

The Triune God as the Sanctifying Agent with His Holy Nature

The adjective ἅγιος modifies God as the unique Holy One in the universe. The Triune God is holy in His trinity, indicated perhaps in the so-called Trisagion (a triple invocation of God as holy—ἅγιος), which is recorded twice in the Bible. When John observed the scene in heaven around the time of the Lord’s ascension, he saw the four living creatures before the throne of God night and day saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God the Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming” (Rev. 4:8). This follows Isaiah’s vision of the seraphim before the throne of God at the time of King Uzziah’s death calling to one another, “Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts” (Isa. 6:3; cf. John 12:41). God is the Holy One. In the Old Testament the adjective ἅγιος, as a noun or substantive, is translated as “the Holy One” almost fifty times, especially as “the Holy One of Israel” (thirty-one times, e.g., 2 Kings 19:22; Psa. 71:22; Isa. 1:4). In the New Testament, God is also called “the Holy One” at least seven times. God is called the Holy One in a general way; for example, the Holy One calls us to be holy in all our manner of life because He is holy, and He indicates that we will be or requires that we be holy, the same as He is in His holy nature (1 Pet. 1:15-16; Lev. 11:44). An anointing from the Holy One, the moving of the Holy Spirit within us “painting” us with Himself with all His elements, teaches us all things (1 John 2:20).

God is addressed as Holy Father (πάτερ ἅγιε) by the Lord Jesus in His prayer prior to His crucifixion (John 17:11). The Father is the source of the divine holy nature. At the opening of the fifth seal, God is addressed as Holy Master (ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος) by the martyred saints under the altar,

requesting God’s judgment to avenge the shedding of their blood (Rev. 6:10).

The Lord Jesus was sanctified by the Father from the world, positionally and dispositionally (John 10:36). He also sanctified Himself so that the disciples could be sanctified in truth (17:19), being sanctified from the world with its usurpation, positionally and dispositionally (v. 17). The Lord Jesus is the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24; John 6:69). Jesus is called God’s holy Servant (τὸν ἅγιον παῖδα), One anointed by God, One whom the rulers of the earth gathered together to crucify, and One who displayed signs and wonders in healing the sick (Acts 4:27, 30). As the Holy One (using the different adjective ὅσιος), Jesus was not permitted by God to see corruption, referring to His limited time in the tomb between His death and resurrection (2:27; 13:35, quoting Psa. 16:10). Christ is also the “the holy things [ὅσια] of David, the faithful things” (Acts 13:34, cf. v. 35), which are Christ Himself in resurrection as the “base of God’s justification to His believers...[so that] the believers can be sanctified by enjoying Christ, the son of David (Matt. 1:1), as God’s sure mercies” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Isa. 55:3, note 2). Also, in His ascension the Lord Jesus is a holy (ὅσιος), guileless, undefiled High Priest (ἀρχιερεύς), separated from sinners, higher than the heavens, and able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to Him, since He lives always to intercede for them (Heb. 7:25-26). He is a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, descending from the kingly tribe of Judah rather than from Levi (5:6; 7:11). He is a merciful and faithful High Priest who accomplished propitiation (2:17). He is our great High Priest who has passed through the heavens; nevertheless, He is touched by our weaknesses, tempted like us, yet without sin (4:14-15), and has entered within the veil of the Holy of Holies in the heavens (6:19-20). He is also a great Priest over the house of God (10:21). He makes the New Testament believers a kingdom and priests to God (Rev. 1:6; 5:10), and priests of God and of Christ (20:6). To the church in Philadelphia, the Lord is the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David (the key of the kingdom), the One who opens (doors or opportunities to the church) and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens (3:7-8). He is also the Holy One (ὅσιος) in His coming to judge the earth (16:5), the One whom all the nations will come and worship (15:4).

The modification *holy* (ἅγιος) related to the Trinity is most commonly associated with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, occurring about eighty-seven times. This is significant since the Holy Spirit is the means for the Triune God to impart His holy nature into humanity, especially seen in the use of verbs such as *sending*, *giving*, *pouring out*, *filling*, *sealing*, *renewing*, *sanctifying*, and *indwelling*. The Holy Spirit was the means to sanctify the humanity of Jesus, beginning from the conception and begetting of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 1:18, 20). The Lord Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit,

indicated by the Spirit's descending on Him after His baptism (Acts 10:38; Matt. 3:16). Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit to overcome the temptations of the devil (Luke 4:1). According to the Spirit of holiness (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης), the divine essence of Christ, Jesus Christ was designated, or marked out, as the Son of God in His humanity out of the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 1:4). In resurrection His humanity was brought into the divine sonship, and "His human nature was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 4, note 1).³

After His death the Lord Jesus commanded the disciples through the Holy Spirit to remain in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49) so that after His resurrection He could breathe the Holy Spirit into them as holy breath (John 20:22). The Father sent the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter and in the Lord Jesus' name, to teach the disciples all things and to remind them of all the things which He had said to them (14:26). The Father gives the Holy Spirit to us (Luke 11:13). In His ascension the Lord Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit from (παρὰ) the Father, and He poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4, 33). The Lord Jesus baptized people in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5). The Holy Spirit came upon people, clothing them outwardly (v. 8; 10:44), and filled them inwardly (6:5; 7:55). The Holy Spirit sent out the apostles (13:4) and appointed overseers in the church in Ephesus to shepherd the flock of God (20:28).

The Holy Spirit is the speaking Spirit, and His speaking sanctifies. The New Testament record indicates that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit Himself spoke and testified (Heb. 3:7ff, quoting Psa. 95:7-11; Heb. 10:15ff, quoting Jer. 31:33), God spoke through the Holy Spirit through Old Testament saints such as David (Acts 1:16) and Isaiah (28:25), and they also spoke in the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36; Acts 4:25), or they spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).⁴ In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is the Spirit speaking to or in the believers (Mark 13:11; Acts 13:2; 20:23; 21:11). Paul spoke the truth in Christ, his conscience bearing witness with him in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1). The apostles preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven (1 Pet. 1:12). The gospel did not come in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance (1 Thes. 1:5).⁵

The Holy Spirit is involved in the believers' experience in the three stages of sanctification. No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit, indicating that calling on

the Lord Jesus is the way to participate in, to enjoy, and to experience the Holy Spirit both for initial and continuing salvation (1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9, 12-13). At the time of believing, the believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13). God saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5). The offering of the Gentiles is acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit (15:16). The believers have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to live a heavenly life on earth and partake of the divine holiness (Heb. 6:4). Paul prays that the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be with all the believers, which is "the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the grace of the Lord with the love of God for our [joint] participation" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 2 Cor. 13:14, note 1). The Holy Spirit dwells in us as the good deposit (2 Tim. 1:14). We build up ourselves upon our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). The

church life as the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17; 1 Thes. 1:6).⁶

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Not only is God Himself holy in His Trinity, but the things related to God also are holy. His name is holy (Luke 1:49). The Lord charged us to pray that the

Father's name would be sanctified, that His name would become excellent in all the earth (Matt. 6:9; Psa. 8:1). The writings of the Bible are called the holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2) and the sacred (ἱερός) writings (2 Tim. 3:15). The law and commandments are holy (Rom. 7:12; 2 Pet. 2:21). God's covenant is holy (Luke 1:72). The objective faith, "the precious things of the New Testament in which we believe for our salvation in Christ," is a most holy faith (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Jude 20, note 2). God's calling of us to fulfill His purpose is with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). God's name, His word, His covenant, the most holy faith, and His calling are some of the means by which God sanctifies us.

The places where God dwells are holy. The tabernacle and the temple (ἱερόν), especially the enclosed portions, the sanctuary (Heb. 9:1; also indicated by the word ναός, Matt. 27:51), the Holy Place (Heb. 9:2), and the Holy of Holies (vv. 3, 12, 25; 13:11), are all holy (ἅγιος). Mount Zion, on which the earthly temple was located, is holy (Psa. 2:6), and the city in which the earthly temple was located is also holy—the holy city, Jerusalem (Matt. 4:5; 27:53; Rev. 11:2). The pattern of the earthly tabernacle or temple is a reflection of a heavenly tabernacle with its Holy Place and Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:8, 12). Our entrance into the heavenly

Holy of Holies is the means for our sanctification (see below). The Mount of Transfiguration, on which the Lord Jesus was transfigured, was also considered a holy mountain (2 Pet. 1:18). His transfiguration was a foretaste of the fully sanctified and glorified humanity of Jesus and of our own humanity in its eternal state. The New Jerusalem is also called the holy city, being saturated with the holy nature of God (Rev. 21:2, 10; 22:19).

The plural form of the adjective ἅγιοι (“holy ones,” “saints”) occurs over sixty times in the New Testament to refer to the believers. The use of the word *saints* maps the experience of the believers in the process of sanctification (see the section below).

In addition to being related to the believers’ being holy, the adjective *holy* is used to modify the holy angels (Acts 10:22; Rev. 14:10), who will accompany Christ at His return (Mark 8:38), the holy Old Testament prophets (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21), and the holy apostles and prophets, to whom the revelation of the church as the mystery of Christ was revealed in their spirit (Eph. 3:5). The believers are also a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), a holy nation (v. 9), and holy brothers, partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1).

The Way of Sanctification— Positional and Dispositional Sanctification in Three Stages

The Triune God as the agent of our sanctification brings us through the three stages and seven steps of sanctification. Sanctification can be considered “the holding line of God’s salvation” (Lee, *The Spirit with Our Spirit* 129). Sanctification (ἁγιασμός—considering the action of sanctification as a whole) is the will of God (1 Thes. 4:3).

The Initial Stage—Seeking, Redeeming, and Regenerating Sanctification

The noun ἁγιασμός is used for the initial stage of sanctification three times. We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). God the Father’s selection is applied to and carried out in and by the Spirit’s sanctification, which causes us to repent to God, be obedient to Christ, and have faith in His redemption, indicated by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. God also chose us from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thes. 2:13).

Sanctification of the Spirit consists of three steps: (1) the Spirit’s seeking us and convicting us at the time that He caused us to repent and believe (1 Pet. 1:2; John 16:8); (2) His sanctifying us both positionally and dispositionally (Heb. 13:12; 1 Cor. 6:11) at the time we were saved; and

(3) His sanctifying us dispositionally as we pursue the growth in life (Rom. 6:19, 22). (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 2 Thes. 2:13, note 3)

The first step mentioned in the note above is also called seeking sanctification, symbolized by the sweeping woman looking for the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). The positional sanctification mentioned in the second step is also called the “redeeming sanctification” and is “by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13:12)”; this step also involves “regenerating sanctification, which is the beginning of dispositional sanctification” (Lee, *The Spirit with Our Spirit* 123).

The initial stage began in eternity past, when we were chosen by God to be holy and without blemish (Eph. 1:4), and is carried out in time, beginning with God’s calling to make us saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7). We believe in the objective faith, which is delivered to the saints for our common salvation (Jude 3). Through believing we become God’s children, partakers of God’s holy, divine nature (John 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:4). We also become fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). The Father qualified us for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light (Col. 1:12).

The Progressing Stage of Sanctification— Renewing, Transforming, and Conforming Sanctification

The progressing stage of sanctification is a long process spanning most of our Christian life. God’s calling is in sanctification (ἁγιασμός), away from the uncleanness of fornication (1 Thes. 4:7), so that we know how to possess our vessel, our tripartite being, in sanctification and honor (v. 4). The verb ἁγιάζω is used to indicate the positional sanctifying of things like gold or gifts, sanctified by the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:17, 19), as well as our separating ourselves as vessels of honor with the divine nature (signified by gold) and redeemed humanity (signified by silver) from vessels of dishonor, such as natural or false vessels in the great house of Christendom (2 Tim. 2:21).

The perfect participle of ἁγιάζω combines the notions of positional and dispositional sanctification. It indicates the resultant state of an action that transpires prior to and that initiates the state of being. We could say that it indicates God’s purpose with respect to the believers, Christ’s finished work to sanctify them, and the resultant state that they are those who have been sanctified positionally and dispositionally.⁷ Paul mentions receiving an inheritance among those who have been sanctified in Acts 20:32, and in 26:18 sanctification occurs by faith in the Lord. Paul prays that his offering of the Gentiles in his ministry of Christ might be acceptable to God, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit, set apart from common things positionally and saturated with God’s holy nature dispositionally (Rom. 15:16).

Gentiles, who were unclean and defiled, were sanctified in the Holy Spirit and became such an offering, acceptable to God. They were set apart from things common and were saturated with God's nature and element, and were thus sanctified both positionally and dispositionally...Such a sanctification is in the Holy Spirit. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 16, note 3)

Paul writes to the church of God in Corinth as those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2), sanctified positionally and dispositionally by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, which was once for all (Heb. 10:10). An unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified (or has been sanctified) by the believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:14).

Dispositional sanctification (ἁγιασμός) is the result, or fruit, of our presenting our members as slaves to righteousness and slaves to God (Rom. 6:19, 22). Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, saturates all the inward parts of our being with God's nature of holiness. Christ is God's wisdom to us, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Righteousness is related to our spirit, sanctification is related to our soul, and redemption is related to our body (Rom. 8:23). While we are pursuing peace with all men, we must also pursue sanctification before God, being separated unto God, so that we can see the Lord and fellowship with Him (Heb. 12:14).⁸

The present continuous tense of ἁγιάζω is used a few times to indicate the ongoing process of sanctification. By His one offering, the Lord has perfected forever those who are being sanctified (10:14). Christ is the One who sanctifies, and the believers are those who are being sanctified; we share the same divine life and nature that sanctifies us and make us His brothers (2:11). Food is sanctified by the word of God and intercession, the present tense indicating a general, timeless truth (1 Tim. 4:5).

The aorist tense of ἁγιάζω views the action of sanctification as a whole and may include the initial and consummate stages. The blood of the covenant sanctifies us, the believers, so that we might enter within the veil by His blood to participate in Him as the heavenly Sanctifier (Heb. 10:29; 13:12). We are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11). Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her for the purpose that He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the rhema word (Eph. 5:25-26). Paul prays that the God of peace would sanctify

the Thessalonian believers wholly and that their spirit, soul, and body would be preserved complete and without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 5:23). Finally, Revelation 22:11 says, "Let him who is holy remain holy still," that is, let him live inwardly according to the holy nature of God—those who do so will receive the Lord's reward (v. 12).

There are a number of experiences that the believers as saints go through in the progressing stage of sanctification, individually and corporately, especially related to receiving revelation, perfecting, fellowship, prayer, and care. The mystery of the word of God concerning Christ and the church was manifested to His saints (Col. 1:26). We need the eyes of our heart to be enlightened to know what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18), and we need to be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ are (3:18). The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers were given to the church for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ (4:11-12). The churches consist of the saints (1 Cor. 14:33), and a church should fellowship with all the saints in the surrounding area; e.g., Paul

wrote to the church in Corinth together with all the saints in the whole of Achaia (2 Cor. 1:1), and his Epistles contain greetings to all the saints (Rom. 16:15; Phil. 4:22; Heb. 13:24). The believers should greet one another in a sanctified way, with a holy (ἅγιος) kiss (1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 16:16). We should receive one another in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints (v. 2) and conduct ourselves in a manner as is fitting (πρέπει) for saints, without fornication and all uncleanness or greediness (Eph. 5:3).

The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God (Rom. 8:27), and Paul requests that the saints pray at every time in spirit, watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints (Eph. 6:18). Paul desires that the saints would first of all pray, lifting up holy (ὅσιος) hands, without wrath and reasoning (1 Tim. 2:8). The prayers of the saints, signified by golden bowls full of incense, are for God to move on the earth (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4).

Care is ministered to the saints (Rom. 15:25; 2 Cor. 8:4; Heb. 6:10) through the saints' material contribution (Rom. 12:13) from the collection for the saints (1 Cor. 16:1). Care for the saints is also indicated by the saints' inward parts

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being refreshed (Philem. 7) and by the washing of the saints' feet (1 Tim. 5:10). This care is motivated by love for the saints (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; Philem. 5).

We are disciplined by God for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness (ἁγιότης, “the character and quality of being holy”; Heb. 12:10). To the Hebrews that meant “to be sanctified unto God’s new covenant so that they could partake of God’s holy nature. For that purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be sanctified from the common” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 10, note 1).

Both the adjectives (ἅγιος) and (ῥόσιος) are also used to indicate the believers’ conduct and expression of the holy nature that they have received. Paul testifies to the Thessalonians, stating, “You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy [ῥόσιως] and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe” (1 Thes. 2:10). “*Holy* refers to conduct toward God, *righteous* to conduct toward men, and *blameless* to conduct toward all—God, men, and Satan” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 10, note 1). Paul requires that an overseer be an unreprouvable steward of God—of a sober mind, righteous, holy (ῥόσιος), and self-controlled (Titus 1:7-8).

We need to put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness (ῥόσιότης) of the reality (Eph. 4:24). “Holiness is mainly toward God, and righteousness is mainly toward men... Holiness and righteousness are...the main characteristics of man’s behavior before God” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Luke 1:75, note 1). We should, in light of the Lord’s coming and the dissolving of the physical elements, conduct ourselves in a holy (ἅγιος) manner of life⁹ and godliness (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

The Consummate Stage of Sanctification— Glorifying Sanctification

The word ἁγιωσύνη (“holiness”), emphasizing the quality of being holy, is used mostly to indicate the consummate stage of sanctification. The Spirit of holiness, the Lord’s divine essence, designated His humanity the Son of God in His resurrection (Rom. 1:4). Holiness, “separation unto God from all things other than Him...to have our entire being—spirit, soul, and body—fully and perfectly separated, sanctified, unto God (1 Thes. 5:23),” needs to be perfected, consummated, or brought to the end of the process (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 2 Cor. 7:1, note 4). The Lord wants to establish our hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 3:13).

At the end of the age the saints are the object of persecution

and martyrdom, especially from the religious and material Babylon, which has persecuted them throughout the church age (Rev. 16:6; 17:6; 18:24), and from Antichrist, who makes war with the saints (13:7; Dan. 7:21) and wears them out (v. 25). The saints need endurance and faith to withstand this (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). The saints who overcome are clothed with fine linen, the righteousnesses of the saints, as a wedding garment for the bride of the Lamb at His coming (19:8). When the Lord Jesus comes, He will be glorified in His saints (2 Thes. 1:10). He will not come alone but with all His saints (1 Thes. 3:13; Zech. 14:5). The overcoming saints receive a reward (Rev. 11:18), the kingdom as their eternal possession (Dan. 7:18, 27), and the saints will judge the world (1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:22).

The Means and Goal of Sanctification— the Temple with the Priesthood and the Offerings

As was mentioned above, the means of initial sanctification is the Lord’s death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, especially for our redemption, which brings us to God and qualifies us sinners to come into God’s holy presence (Heb. 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2). For initial and ongoing sanctification, we also need the word of God as the sacred writings to make us wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15), as the logos to sanctify us in the truth, or the reality, contained in the word (John 17:17, 19), and as the sanctifying element in the cleansing of the washing (or laver) of the water in the rhema (Eph. 5:26). We also need to be sanctified in “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., in the person of the Lord, in an organic union with the Lord through faith) and in the Spirit of God (i.e., in the power and realization of the Holy Spirit)” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 1 Cor. 6:11, note 1).

In addition to these elements, there is a particular environment in which sanctification takes place. Sanctification is related to God’s building, His dwelling place, that is, the temple and its sanctuary, with the priesthood, seen typologically in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the church as the Body of Christ in the New Testament. God desires to bring humanity into His presence, with the goal of making them a part of His eternal dwelling place. In the New Testament we have a heavenly temple and a High Priest who is sanctifying us by interceding for us, anointing us with His Spirit, and forming us into a priesthood so that we can tell out His virtues and offer up spiritual sacrifices; this is so that we can be added to God’s building, grow, and be built up together as an enlarged dwelling place for God and humanity that will consummate in the holy city, New Jerusalem.

The Lord Jesus was the tabernacle of God manifested in the flesh (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). He also called His physical body a temple (ναός, “an inner sanctuary”), which body was destroyed on the cross and raised up and enlarged in

resurrection (John 2:19-21). He opened the way into the heavenly Holy of Holies (the inner sanctuary, with its opening signified by the veil of the earthly temple being rent, Matt. 27:51), which is the way of the new covenant, the way of the mingled spirit, made possible by the shedding of His own blood in His death on the cross. He entered once for all into the heavenly Holy of Holies (Ἁγία Ἁγίων, Heb. 9:3), obtaining an eternal redemption (vv. 8, 12). Now we can have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus (10:19). Witness Lee explains:

The Holy of Holies today is in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is (Heb. 9:12, 24). How, then, can we enter the Holy of Holies while we are still on earth? The secret is our spirit, referred to in 4:12. The very Christ who is in heaven is now also in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). As the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51), He joins our spirit to heaven and brings heaven into our spirit. Hence, whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the Holy of Holies. There we meet with God, who is on the throne of grace. (*Recovery Version*, Heb. 10:19, note 1)

A believer's body is a temple (ναός) of the Holy Spirit individually (1 Cor. 6:19), and the believers are a temple (ναός) of God indwelt by the Spirit of God corporately (3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16). Through the process of entering into and living in the Holy of Holies and allowing the Holy Spirit to spread from our spirit into our soul, all the building (consisting of the church as the Body of Christ universally) is growing into a holy temple (ναὸν ἅγιον) in the Lord (Eph. 2:21), while locally it is a dwelling place (κατοικητήριον) of God in spirit (v. 22). Ultimately, the church will be presented to Christ glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things but, rather, being holy and without blemish (5:27). The church will consummate in the New Jerusalem as an enlarged temple, an enlarged inner sanctuary (ναός), or Holy of Holies (Rev. 21:16) consisting of the Triune God mingled with God's redeemed and transformed people (v. 22; 3:12).¹⁰ These metaphorical uses of ναός, referring to the Lord Jesus, the believers, the church, and the New Jerusalem, indicate the expanding dwelling place of God, which is expanding through the process of sanctification, that is, through God dispensing His holy nature into the tripartite beings of the believers, from their spirit into their soul and body, to make His home in their hearts (Eph. 3:16), ultimately consummating in the New Jerusalem, the enlarged Holy of Holies as a tabernacle (Rev. 21:3) and a temple (v. 22) for eternity.

In the church we are priests following the Lord Jesus within the veil and outside the camp (Heb. 6:19; 13:13). He makes us New Testament believers a kingdom and priests to God (Rev. 1:6; 5:10), priests of God and of Christ (20:6). We believers, the living stones, coming to Christ, the living stone, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood (ἱεράτευμα) to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:4-5). We are also a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that we may tell out the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (v. 9).¹¹

Paul refers to himself as a minister (λειτουργός, from λαός ("people") and ἔργον ("work")) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest (ἱεραργέω) of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16). Paul, as a priest of the gospel of God, ministered Christ to the Gentiles

so that the Gentiles whom he gained through his gospel preaching would become an offering presented to God, present themselves, the members of the Body, as a living sacrifice (12:1), and ultimately be presented full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28) as constituents of the New Jerusalem, the enlarged universal and eternal temple.

By entering into and living in the Holy of Holies and allowing the Holy Spirit to spread from our spirit into our soul, all the building (the church as the Body of Christ universally) is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

Our labor should be a work of the New Jerusalem, which has the additional characteristics of being from above, heavenly, and descending out of heaven from God, all of which make the New Jerusalem intrinsically holy. She is the Jerusalem above, the mother of the believers (Gal. 4:26). She is the heavenly Jerusalem to whom we come forward, equivalent to coming forward to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God and to myriads of angels, to the universal gathering (Heb. 12:22). The New Jerusalem is the name of the city of God, which descends out of heaven from God (Rev. 3:12). The New Jerusalem is the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2, 10).

Sanctification takes place by means of the blood of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament offerings. It is through the word of God, by means of the Holy Spirit who imparts God's holy nature into the believers, and in the church as the reality of the temple as God's dwelling place on earth. In this process the believers carry out their priestly functions to bring God to sinners and to offer sinners to God to become constituents of God's enlarged dwelling

place, which consummates in the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Sanctification is part of the second stage of God's organic salvation, but it is also a holding line encompassing all the steps of God's salvation. The Triune God Himself operates to sanctify us. The Father is the source of holiness in the Trinity with His holy nature. He sanctified humanity initially in the person of Jesus Christ through the agent of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ also sanctified Himself for the sake of the disciples so that they also could become holy. In the initial stage of sanctification we are sanctified by the Spirit to repent and be redeemed to God and justified based on the blood and thus be sanctified positionally. Through receiving Christ as the Spirit we are regenerated in our spirit, which is the beginning of dispositional sanctification. The processes of renewing, transformation, and conformation take place in conjunction with dispositional sanctification, which takes place in our soul. Sanctification is consummated through the steps of glorification with the transfiguration of our body, thus sanctifying our whole being, making us the same as God in His holy nature, to match Christ as His holy bride and to become an eternal mutual dwelling place of God and humanity, the holy city, New Jerusalem.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹Mostly ὁσιος is used to translate the Hebrew word *hasid*, especially in the plural *hasidim* ("faithful ones," "saints") (Psa. 16:10), a noun that comes from the same root as *hesed* ("loving-kindness"). The word *hesed* is difficult to translate. It can be considered lovingkindness, faithfulness, covenant love, and mercy. Those who receive God's *hesed*, His lovingkindness, faithfulness, covenant love, and mercy, and live by it become *hasid* and even exhibit these virtues in their living with others.

²Jerusalem is spelled both Ἱεροσόλυμα (as a declinable Greek plural noun) and Ἱερουσαλήμ (as an indeclinable noun, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Yerushalayim* or *Yerushalem*). The spelling of Jerusalem with the prefix Ἱερ- concurs with its being the holy city, in which was the holy temple. James A. Montgomery considers that *yeru*, the first (obscure) element of the name Jerusalem, "has been metamorphosed into a recognizable Greek word, ... [one that] predicates the holy nature of the city" (281). Frederick E. Brenk talks about the renaming of cities with Greek names by approximating their original name. In the case of Jerusalem, "the ἱερὸν part would be an attempt to render the native, or supposedly native, meaning by a similar sounding Greek word, while σόλυμοι would be a reformation along familiar Greek lines of a similar sounding epichoric [peculiar to a local region]" (9).

³"The Spirit in this verse does not refer to the person of the Holy Spirit of God but to the divine essence of Christ. This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), the divinity of Christ, is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Rom. 1:4, note 4).

⁴The term *Holy Spirit* does not occur in the Old Testament; only the term *the Spirit of holiness* does (Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11). It is interesting to note that the New Testament indicates that the Holy Spirit was involved in the speaking of Old Testament saints. The Holy Spirit also reveals that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing (Heb. 9:8).

⁵Sometimes the Holy Spirit forbade the apostles to speak the word, e.g., in Asia (Acts 16:6).

⁶Some actions frustrate the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work, such as speaking against or blaspheming (Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29), opposing (Acts 7:51), and grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Some even tried to deceive the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3).

⁷Alford distinguishes between the present participle and the perfect participle of the verb ἀγιάζω, considering the present participle as emphasizing the believers' present state (45).

⁸The noun ἁγιασμός ("sanctification") is translated "holiness" one time, referring to women's being saved through childbearing if they remain in faith and love and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim. 2:15).

⁹The word ἀναστροφᾶς, translated "manner of life," is plural in Greek and means, literally, "turnings about," referring to holy ways of conduct or behaviors.

¹⁰The dimensions of the New Jerusalem form a cube; this follows the dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament, which were equal in length, breadth, and height (Exo. 26:2-8; 1 Kings 6:20). Prior to the consummation of the New Jerusalem, God operates from His temple (ναός) in heaven, in which is God's throne and out from which proceed various judgments on the earth and its inhabitants (Rev. 7:15; 11:19; 15:5).

¹¹Peter uses the same expression βασιλειον ἱεράτευμα ("a royal priesthood") that occurs in the Septuagint of Exodus 19:6, which translates the expression "a kingdom of priests."

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