

The Doctrine of Sanctification – Part One

The New Testament uses the Greek words *hágios* (an adjective meaning *holy* or *sanctified*, but used also as noun to mean *holy one* or *saint*), *hagiázō* (a verb meaning *to make holy* or *to sanctify*), and *hagiasmós* (a noun meaning *holiness* or *sanctification*) to refer to Christians. Hence the doctrine of *sanctification*.

As Anthony Hoekema states, “We may define sanctification as that gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, involving our responsible participation, by which he delivers us from the pollution of sin, renews our nature according to the image of God, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to him” (*Saved By Grace*, p. 192).

I. Sanctification Has Initial, Progressive, and Final Aspects

1. Initial Sanctification – Sometimes this also called *positional* sanctification or *definitive* sanctification.

Acts 20:32
Acts 26:14-18
1 Corinthians 1:2
1 Corinthians 6:11

As Robert Reymond has written:

Sanctification is generally thought of as a process, and there is certainly a sense in which it is. But the New Testament often represents the Christian as one who has been sanctified, and therefore as one who has been definitively constituted in some way and on some basis as holy (see Acts 20:32; 26:18; I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Eph. 5:26; note the perfect tense of *αγιαζω*, *hagiazō* in the first three references and the aorist tense in the last t references, as well as the numerous instances where Christians are called 'saints' or 'holy ones'). (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 756)

2. Progressive Sanctification – Sometimes this is also called *practical* sanctification.

Romans 6:19-22
2 Corinthians 3:18 (See also Romans 8:29-30)
Hebrews 10:5-14

3. Final Sanctification

Romans 8:16-23
1 Corinthians 15:49-54
1 Thessalonians 5:23
1 John 3:2

II. Sanctification is Not Completed in this Life

Scripture does not allow for the pernicious error of perfectionism.

Matthew 6:11-12
Philippians 3:12-16
James 3:2
1 John 1:8