THE INITIATIVE OF GOD
TRANSFORMATION OF A FAMILY TREE
GROWING IN GRACE

GOD SANCTIFIES

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Fire often brings powerful and long-lasting effects. It usually starts when a spark or heat source encounters fuel. It often ignites quickly and soars to high temperatures in a matter of seconds. It always consumes the fuel and often leaves permanent evidence of its work. Sometimes fire purifies objects exposed to it. Fire often stimulates growth after passing through a forest.

This issue of Holiness Today explores God’s incredible grace toward us through the lens of sanctification. You will read many passages of Scripture and additional biblical references that define and describe sanctifying grace. God sometimes illustrates His sanctifying work with images of fire. Some of the following articles reference Isaiah’s life transforming vision of God presented in Isaiah chapter 6 when hot coal from the altar fire purged his unclean lips. The Holy Spirit fell on Christ’s disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). God touched each one of them with fire when He filled them with His Spirit (Acts 2:3-4). Peter described one of the results of God’s Pentecostal fire as he spoke to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). He recounted how God worked among Gentiles just as He had among the Jews. He said, “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9, emphasis added).

All of the articles in this issue shed light on our Wesleyan understanding of the gospel of full salvation. That gospel teaches us that God deals with sin in two decisive ways. First, He forgives us of our sinful deeds when we confess to Him. Then, He purifies our hearts by faith, destroying our inward bent that causes us to yearn to have our own way (Romans 6:6). Only when we surrender ourselves fully to the transforming work the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2) can God sanctify us through and through (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

I grew up singing a congregational song at our church titled “How the Fire Fell.” The chorus says “Oh, I never shall forget how the fire fell...when the Lord sanctified me.” I resonate with the message of this song as I reflect on my spiritual journey. I was at youth camp in the Tuesday evening worship service, shortly after my 15th birthday. There was an altar invitation. God spoke to my heart, and I went forward and prayed at the altar on the left side of the tabernacle. My memory of the events of that night is as clear as if they happened just yesterday. Divine encounters usually brand a spot in my brain for life.

I surrendered my will, desires, dreams, and plans for my life to Him that night. I gave God everything I knew to give along with anything that might come in the future that I didn’t know about yet. Human language can never describe what God did in my heart and mind. I can only say that it transformed every fiber of my being for time and eternity. That divine encounter influenced my entire life. I testify with the songwriters, “I never shall forget how the fire fell when the Lord sanctified me.” Thanks be to God!

Frank Moore is editor in chief of Holiness Today.

I have fond memories of the church in Mozambique and the ways it shaped my life. The Church of the Nazarene in Mozambique invests a lot of time in teaching and preaching on holiness. A week or weeks of holiness revival were normal and intended to rekindle interest in, passion for, and practice of biblical holiness of both heart and life. Such revivals focused on three areas: prevenient grace, saving grace, and sanctifying grace.

Over the years, I witnessed several of these revivals in Mozambique, but one gathering has stayed with me. In that gathering, I witnessed the transformation of a man whose family and community did not think there was hope for change in his life. This man's story included substance abuse, domestic violence, witchcraft and worship of idols (ancestral worship), and much more. His wife and children had started to come to church, and one of his children prayed earnestly for the salvation of his dad. One evening during the revival week, he walked into the church — not because he had planned to join us for worship but because he was upset with his family, and he was going to deal with and embarrass them right there. He was drunk and did not have the nicest things to say. The preacher deviated from his script and calmly engaged in a conversation with him. It was entertaining to many of us; but at the end of their exchange, the man sat down. He suddenly became quiet and more attentive to the Word. As the message ended, he joined those who were at the altar. He cried out to the Lord for His salvation. Finally, he had a huge smile on his face and said, "It is over. Today I choose a new life. I will pursue this new life as long as I live."

My dad, Rev. Manuel Chambo (Tshambe) was the preacher. As he was getting ready to close the service he said, "It is beautiful to witness the transformation in people's lives as they respond to God's grace to forgive their sins." Then he added, "But there is more that God wants to do in our lives. The message for us and for our world is that God invites us into a holy relationship with Him. We are to be the holy people of God. This is made possible through the forgiveness of our sins and the work of God in our lives to give us victory over sin." Of course, he was doing a little promo to ensure that we would all be back the following nights.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1, Paul writes to the Church to say, now that you are in Christ, your lives must be compatible and in harmony with your identity in Christ. Live a holy life. Be loyal to God. Love God with all that is within you. Do not worship or give devotion to other gods and forces. Paul is simply saying, as followers of Christ, we cannot continue to live the same way we did when we were in darkness.

It is reasonable to think that Paul was concerned about the followers of Christ who continued to be attracted to pagan practices. Hence, Paul wanted them to know that the lifestyle of holiness people was incompatible with that of the pagans. Holiness people are called to cease living as idolaters and immoral persons.

The good news is that it is possible to live in this world and have the power to overcome the temptation to participate in sin. Holy living is possible for all those who are in Christ because God Himself makes it possible when we yield our lives to Him. God has given us this beautiful gift, and He enables us to live as a holy people.

Well, the man that I mentioned at the beginning of this article — over the years, I watched his life change. I watched him grow in his walk with the Lord, and I witnessed his family get to know a new person and enjoy a season of peace. This man had become a new creation. His sins were forgiven. He had come to know and experience God's sanctifying grace. The trajectory of his family changed because he received the gift of the forgiveness of sin and deliverance from the dominion of sin.

This biblical truth of full salvation is what our world needs. We should offer nothing less than that.

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THE INITIATIVE OF GOD

PREVENIENT

GRACE

AND

SANCTIFICATION

by T. A. NOBLE
AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS AFTERWARD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS.

JOEL 2:28

FOR MANY OF US, THE WORD “SANCTIFICATION,” LIKE THE word “justification,” has come to refer to one particular moment in the life-story of the Christian. We think of justification as that moment when we first come to faith and our sins are forgiven. In the last article in this series of three, we saw that, while that is correct, the word justification has greater depth than that.1

We now have to say the same about the word sanctification. We rejoice that God can bring the Christian to a moment of entire sanctification—but our sanctification begins before that. The doctrine of sanctification is also deeply based in the prevenient work of God. What happens in the life-story of each Christian is based in God’s initiative, His prevenient, gracious work in the whole history of salvation.

CORPORATE SANCTIFICATION IN CHRIST

First, it was God’s prevenient grace, or God’s initiative in Christ, that brought about our sanctification.

Once again, we can see how God’s initiative prepared the way in the people of Israel. If sedeq (justice or righteousness) was relative or relational, that is, a matter of their being faithful to the covenant, so

**HOLINESS TODAY**

*Sanctified.*

Body, corporate humanity was to God. Through it, in His own death as an act of Jesus in His mind and heart conscious, intentional was the unity. So it is important that it is a body-soul (*psychosomatic*) biblical writers, each human being “spiritual” sacrifice. But for the—-it was not a merely physical body of Jesus? He certainly offered His of the actual blood of the body was completed, and up from the grave came the first fruits of the new humanity of the resurrection, fully redeemed even from decay and death.

THE PREVENIENT GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God’s *prevenient* work of corporate sanctification was, in one sense, complete and finished. But in another sense, it was not. There is a second way in which God has taken the initiative *preveniently* to sanctify us.

What had been worked out *corporately* for the human race as such in the one human being (Jesus) now had to be worked out in *each* human being. Only *now* had that become possible. The Holy Spirit had sanctified the human Jesus entirely right from conception and birth and throughout His life, so only now could the Spirit be “poured out on all flesh” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).

On the Day of Pentecost, the risen, ascended, exalted Lord Jesus baptized His church in the Holy Spirit. This too was *prevenient* grace—God acting in *gracious* initiative. This too was corporate: “They were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). But within the corporate was the personal: “And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” (Acts 2:3). The apostles, the sanctified people of God, launched out into Spirit-inspired mission of preaching the gospel of Christ.

Wherever they went, preaching the word in the power of the Spirit, they established churches—corporate fellowships of sanctified believers. In one of his earliest letters, Paul wrote “to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul was addressing the whole church. They were all “saints” (sanctified ones). As John Wesley clearly insisted, all Christians are in a sense sanctified. “We grant,” he wrote, “that the term sanctified is continually applied by Saint Paul to all that were justified.”

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**qodesh** (holiness) was a matter of a real change. “You shall be holy for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). The sinful people of Israel had to offer atoning sacrifices to keep the holy presence of God among them. Particularly, on the Day of Atonement, all of Israel was represented by the High Priest as he took the blood of the atonement into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. There, he sprinkled it on the mercy seat, or “seat of atonement” (*kapporeth*). This was God’s *prevenient, gracious* preparation for the coming of His Son to sanctify us through His blood.

In the New Testament, the epistle to the Hebrews develops most fully the understanding of our corporate sanctification through Christ’s great act of Atonement. “The blood of bulls and goats,” while commanded by God and provisionally effective for their day, actually had no inherent sanctifying power (Hebrews 10:4). The only power of these elements was to point forward to the one effective sacrifice—the body and blood of Christ.

But how are we to understand this? Was there some inherent power in the physical chemistry of the actual blood of the body of Jesus? He certainly offered His physical body—it was not a merely “spiritual” sacrifice. But for the biblical writers, each human being is a body-soul (*psychosomatic*) unity. So it is important that it was the conscious, intentional act of Jesus in His mind and heart to deliver Himself up bodily to the human, political authorities who would crucify Him. He willed His own death as an offering to God. Through it, in His own body, corporate humanity was sanctified.

This act of self-consecration was the culmination of Jesus’ whole life. Jesus was born into the sinful race of Adam. In becoming incarnate, He entered into corporate solidarity with fallen humanity. But right from conception and birth by the Holy Spirit, He sanctified human being and human existence in His own Person. At every point where we were disobedient and living for ourselves, He obeyed the Father’s will in self-denial. He therefore entirely sanctified human nature and human being and human life throughout His consistent, victorious life of holiness. His obedient life as a human being from birth to death was a sinless, self-denying, holy offering to God.

That life came to its climax at the cross. There, Jesus finally and definitively made the ultimate, perfect sacrifice as a human being—giving up His own life in faith that God would raise Him from the dead. And just as the High Priest of Israel represented the people of Israel to God, so the man Christ Jesus represented and *embodied* the whole human race before God. The corporate sanctification of our humanity was completed, and up from the grave came the first fruits of the new humanity of the resurrection, fully redeemed even from decay and death.
Wesley appealed to the more Johannine language of regeneration to speak of the first initiation of sanctification. And he insisted that justification and regeneration always go together:

Though it be allowed that justification and the new birth are, in point of time, inseparable from each other, yet they are easily distinguished, as being not the same, but things of a wholly different nature. Justification implies only a relative [relational], the new birth a real change. God in justifying us does something for us, in begetting us again, he does the work in us. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God. The one is the taking away of guilt, the other of the power, of sin.³

This “real change” is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough, therefore, to speak of the beginning of the Christian life as “justification,” as we so often do! That leaves the impression that we can have our sins forgiven yet still live unchanged in sin—the false notion that we can accept Jesus as Saviour without accepting Him as Lord. We must rather insist that with justification goes regeneration, the beginning of sanctification. We are “born again”! There is new love for God in the heart. Receiving the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6). And, there is consistent victory over outward, deliberate, voluntary breaking of God’s known law (1 John 3:6). Christians ought not lie and cheat and murder and live sexually immoral lives.

But the Holy Spirit is not finished with us. God still works within us preveniently to do more. The “gradual work of sanctification” follows.⁴ The Spirit begins to reveal to us that there is “indwelling sin” (Romans 7:17, 20). Only by setting out to follow the Lord Jesus as justified, regenerated disciples can we make that discovery. Only then can we discover that deep inner tension between our new love for God and the old desire to put ourselves first. That is “the mind set on the flesh” (Romans 8: 6-8). “Flesh,” as we have seen, means humanity considered as corporate; so the “mind set on the flesh” may be interpreted as “the mind set on human goals and values.”

Has God’s prevenient grace provided for our delivery from that? Paul is clear: “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).

What is the just requirement of the law? Jesus summed that up in the two great commandments: the love of God first and foremost and the love of neighbor. Acting preveniently in His grace, God can therefore now fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of love in such a way that the shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 is at last fulfilled. That is the perfection of love about which John writes (1 John 4:7-24).

Even still, the prevenient grace of God is not finished with us yet! We still confess how far we fall short, but the Holy Spirit continues to be active in us and around us to lead us “from glory to glory” with all His people to that great day when our physical redemption will at last be complete in the resurrection. He brings some of us through great tribulation and suffering. But He has promised never to leave us. His prevenient, saving, justifying, sanctifying grace is more than sufficient.

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YOU SHALL DWELL IN THE LAND THAT I GAVE TO YOUR FATHERS, AND YOU SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD.

EZEKIEL 36:28
OVER RECENT YEARS, AN INTRIGUING PHRASE ON social media relationship updates has caught my attention: *It’s complicated!* I’ve not known exactly how to interpret this ambiguous phrase. I assume that it may describe a struggling relationship or perhaps one’s uncertainty regarding the nature of a relationship. As we encounter the stories of our Old Testament ancestors, it is easy to imagine that our ancestors might also have described the status of their covenant relationship with the Lord as *complicated.*
The complication of this relationship emerged out of the reality that the covenant established at Sinai was a truly bilateral (two-sided) relationship between God and people. The familiar covenant phrase, I will be your God, and you will be my people, demonstrates the mutual nature of this relationship. If the covenant were merely the one-sided responsibility of God, complications would never have emerged. Certainly, the Lord alone had initiated covenant by grace. The people had no part of initiating covenant through legal observances, pious works, or sacrificial gifts. However, the covenant insisted that the community respond to the Lord’s gracious acts through undivided loyalty to God.

The opening lines of the Decalogue articulate this relationship between God’s initiating grace and the mandate of exclusive loyalty: “I am the Lord your God who brought you up from the land of Egypt. You will have no other gods in my presence” (Exodus 20:2-3). This call was repeated in the words of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5): “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (italics added for emphasis). In the Holiness Code, the Lord’s mandate for wholehearted fidelity extended also to one’s neighbor: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:18). Centuries later, Jesus confirmed that the entirety of the Torah and Prophets was built upon the mandate of undivided, faithful love for God and neighbor (Matthew 20:34-40).

FACING THE DILEMMA

Within this context of God’s call to undivided fidelity, our Old Testament ancestors encountered the complication of the covenant relationship. As various religious, economic, and political powers of the day promised our ancestors either abundant blessing in life or rescue from impending doom, they struggled to put into practice consistent covenant fidelity. In order not only to survive but to thrive in their families, fields, and livestock, they turned to the popular fertility gods of their day, blending the manipulative forms of worship of fertility gods with their worship of the Lord who refused to be manipulated or coerced by the worshippers. In their desire for security, they attempted to “contain” or “domesticate” the Lord’s presence by constructing idols.

Fearful that they would succumb to the attacks of their enemies, they established political powers (kingship) to lead them into battle and to secure their future. In their desire to become a respected “big player” in the world of their day, they formed alliances with empires and nations that promised success and prosperity at the expense of their undivided allegiance to the Lord. As if unfaithfulness to the God who rescued them was not enough, they abandoned loyalty to their neighbor by engaging in acts of oppression, injustice, and violence. The rightly-ordered covenant relationship with God and neighbor became distorted, weakened, and ultimately shattered.

The covenant relationship of whole-hearted faithfulness to God and neighbor was at the core of the identity and purpose of the community. Called and set apart to be the Lord’s instrument of life-giving blessing, a kingdom of
priests and holy nation, to the world (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:4-6), the people's ongoing infidelity to God and neighbor put their distinct (holy) identity and purpose in the world at stake. How could a people created by God to be God's priestly, life-giving blessing to the world faithfully embody that identity if they were in actuality embodying the popular fertility gods, humanly-constructed idols, strong-armed kings, and self-serving alliances? They may have called themselves the people of the Lord, but there could not have been a greater disparity between the Lord's faithfulness and their unfaithfulness.

IS THERE HOPE?

To read the Old Testament stories of this complicated covenant relationship is like the ups-and-downs of a roller-coaster. On one hand, great religious renewals occurred. Who would ever forget the mighty revival led by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in which the prophets of Baal were obliterated or the great religious reforms of Kings Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah in which temples were demolished and high places leveled? In each renewal, hope emerged that the covenant people had finally tried hard enough, were determined enough, and sacrificed enough to become who they had always confessed themselves to be: the people of the Lord. On the other hand, these renewals were consistently followed by the people's stubbornness, unfaithfulness, and lack of trust in the Lord alone. It seemed that no matter how hard the prophets, kings, and people tried in their efforts to change their unfaithful ways, the burning fires of reform always ended with smoldering embers of human failure.

In the midst of the greatest of all reforms depicted in the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah recognized that something much deeper was at stake than the people's feeble attempts to try harder, change, and renew their ways. Concluding that it was as impossible for the people to change their ways as for a leopard to remove its spots or an Ethiopian his skin, Jeremiah announced that the people's infidelity to the Lord— their sin—was deeply engraved upon their hearts with a diamond pen (13:23; 17:1). It appeared that the covenant relationship was headed for utter failure.

TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

If one stops reading Jeremiah's message at the point of leopard's spots, Ethiopian's skin, and a diamond pen, one could only conclude that the covenant people were hopelessly addicted to their infidelity. However, Jeremiah does not stop. The same divine grace that had "gone before" in calling a childless, landless couple¹ and that had established right-relationship through covenant at Sinai² would not stop short with the people being handed over to the repetitious cycle of covenant infidelity. The God who had called this community to whole-hearted love and undivided faithfulness would not stop calling. The Lord who had conceived and given birth to the people by grace would also transform them by grace so that they would indeed love the Lord with all their heart and all their soul and all their strength.

Looking beyond the present dilemma with an optimism of God's grace and hope, Jeremiah imagined a day in which the Lord Himself would, by grace, do what the people were incapable of doing through their futile attempts. The Lord Himself would write the divine instruction (torah) upon the very minds of the people so that the Lord indeed would be their God, and they would be His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The prophet Ezekiel, Jeremiah's contemporary, clung to the hope of God's transforming grace in which the Lord Himself would purify them from their addictive idols, give them a new heart (mind), and put the divine Spirit in them so that they would faithfully serve the Lord and would indeed be His people and the Lord would be their God (Ezekiel 36:25-28). Ezekiel goes as far as to say that by sanctifying (making holy) His people, the Lord would sanctify (make holy) His own name before the eyes of the nations (36:23).

Where all human attempts to conjure up faithfulness prove futile, God's grace abounds! For our biblical ancestors and all subsequent generations, the divine, sanctifying grace that transforms was, is, and always will be the only hope for God's people if they are faithful to love the Lord with all their hearts and love their neighbor as themselves. Indeed, the One who called our ancestors and all subsequent generations to undivided, whole, entire faithfulness is Himself faithful, and He will do it (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

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ESTABLISHED IN CHRIST

by Svetlana Khobnya

HOLINESS TODAY

STRIVE FOR PEACE WITH EVERYONE, AND FOR THE HOLINESS WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.

HEBREWS 12:14
THE TERM SANCTIFICATION IS NOT A DISTINCT WORD IN THE Greek New Testament. The meaning of sanctification, expressed by a number of words, is related to holiness. The adjective “holy” refers primarily to God. The holiness of God the Father is evident everywhere in the New Testament as represented in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Holy ones are God’s people, namely those who belong to Him, relate to Him, and are set apart by Him and for Him.

The Greek verb ἁγιάζω can express an action, such as “to make holy,” “to sanctify,” “to consecrate,” “to purify,” or a state that results from an action: “to be sanctified.” Logically, the subject of a sanctifying action is always God and not people. Consequently, objects consecrated by God are holy because He is holy.
In the New Testament, God the Father set Jesus apart and sent Him into the world (John 10:36). Jesus is explicitly referred to as the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24; John 6:69) who becomes the source for sanctification just like the Father and the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 1:2). Jesus is able to sanctify Himself (John 17:19) and the Church (Ephesians 5:26). In 1 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes that Christ became for us “wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews explain Christ’s ability to do the Father’s work of sanctification because of Christ’s act of atonement (Romans 3:22-26; Hebrews 10:10). In general, however, Paul speaks mostly of the sanctified in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2) while Hebrews develops a full understanding of Christ’s atonement by comparing Christ’s act to the Old Testament sacrifices.

In the Old Testament times, the blood of animals was offered for defiled people (for priests so that they could enter the holy place to carry on their duties and to represent people before God and for others so that they could go on in their covenant relationship with God). But animal sacrifices in and of themselves could not perfect, cleanse, or sanctify anyone (Hebrews 10:2). Instead, sacrifices reminded God’s people that their sins had yet to be fully and finally dealt with (Hebrews 10:3). Only Christ’s blood fully purifies the consciences of believers from their sinful works (Hebrews 9:14) once and for all, eliminating the need for further sacrifices.

Christ as a human being without blemish offered Himself as a sacrifice to God on behalf of all people. Since Jesus’ life on earth and His death on the cross demonstrate perfect obedience to God, His sacrifice was the perfect offering—holy and acceptable to God—with no need of further sacrifices. At the same time, as the High Priest, He could represent the people of Israel and the whole of humanity before God (Hebrews 9:25-28). Therefore, Christ’s offering depicts God’s initiative in Christ, which affects our state of sanctification (Hebrews 13:12; 1 Corinthians 6:11). In this sense, the concept of sanctification is related to reconciliation and demonstrates God’s prevenient grace.

**SANCTIFICATION BY CHRIST IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Furthermore, Christians are expected to share in the holiness of God exemplified in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 12:10). The Greek noun ἁγιότης occurs only once in the New Testament here in Hebrews; it means “holiness” and it describes God’s essential character. God prepares Christians to share His holiness in the fulfilment of the Old Testament promise, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44-45).

Another noun for “holiness” (ἁγιωσύνη) occurs three times in the New Testament and only in Paul’s writings. It refers to God’s incomparable majesty, and Paul uses this word to describe the activity of the Spirit (Romans 1:4) and the divinely created condition of holiness that demands completion (2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). The third noun for “holiness” or “sanctification” (ἁγιασμός) signifies the effects of consecration—sanctification of heart and life (1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 12:14) —
and a life of obedience to God in opposition to sin and lust (Romans 6:19, 22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3). Although this third Greek word for holiness (ἁγιασμός) is also rare in the New Testament, writers of the New Testament emphasize the real change that occurs in those who are made holy by the sanctifying action of God in Christ and enabled by the Spirit.

Paul, for example, appealed to Christians to live a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), to present themselves as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable, and to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). In fact, he reminded them that in Christ they are God’s holy temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 2:20). As a body, corporately and individually, they are God’s dwelling place and are called to live as holy people in the way that glorifies God. Peter described those who are sanctified in Christ as a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5) and urged them to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). He provided plenty of examples of what he meant by that: to love one another deeply from the heart (1 Peter 1:22), to abstain from the desires of the flesh (1 Peter 2:11), and to worship Christ as Lord (1 Peter 3:15).

Paul wrote that the sign of the new community sanctified by Christ is their participation in the baptism of Christ (Romans 6:3-14), which means dying to sin and rising with Him in a new life of obedience to God. Paul implied that death and sin do not rule over sanctified people because they are transferred into the sphere of Christ and fall under His grace. God in His grace does what we cannot do on our own. We are brought into the realm of His Son and are thus empowered to obey. With minds set on Christ and lives filled with the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:10), followers of Christ experience ongoing transformation. William Greathouse summarizes the concept of God’s grace in action in a nutshell: “God loves us enough to accept us just as we are . . . but he loves us too much to leave us as we are. He sets us free to enjoy a new quality of life” — a life of holiness.

The Christian life is marked by obedience to God, established in Christ, and empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel writers, John in particular, testify to the fact that Jesus promised never to leave His followers. The Spirit of Christ is poured out after Jesus’ ascension to enable Christians to live their lives personally and collectively as Christ’s true disciples—to love one another and to live out Christ’s holiness in the world. From the Day of Pentecost onward, the Spirit has been poured out as it was promised in the Old Testament (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28), enabling disciples to spread the Word of God and to establish churches.

Initially, the holy ones were mostly Christians from Jewish backgrounds (perhaps even in Acts 2, 9:13, 32, 41), but eventually the holy people of God extended into the Gentiles’ world. “The holy ones” is the most common designation for all those who are united with Christ and led by His Spirit (Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; Hebrews 3:1). Spreading the good news has always remained the mission of the sanctified Church.

In the Spirit, God unites His people to Him, literally adopting them so that together they could carry on in love, peace, and hope even through suffering (Romans 5:1-5; 8:14-30). Faith, hope, and love remain essential elements of the holy community in which God abides in the Spirit of Christ (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Even in moments of weakness and while awaiting final redemption, sanctified people ought to rely on the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:26-27). In such times, if we do not know what we ought to pray, the Spirit asks on our behalf because He knows our hearts and God’s will for us: “If we are faithless, he remains faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13). Furthermore, He “who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). In fact, God Himself sanctifies us entirely before the coming of our Lord Jesus and desires that our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless until the day He comes again (1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Corinthians 7:1). This is not only a hope but also a blessed assurance that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him, conforming them to the image of His Son and giving them His glory (Romans 8:26-30).

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HELP FOR THE JOURNEY

I WILL SPRINKLE CLEAN WATER ON YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE CLEAN FROM ALL YOUR UNCLEANNESSES, AND FROM ALL YOUR IDOLS I WILL CLEANSE YOU.

EZEKIEL 36:25

by CARL LETH
DISCIPLESHIP IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY. THANKFULLY, GOD provides help for us along the way. The sacraments are specially ordained means of grace that serve as resources for enduring and victorious Christian living. That is, they are means of God’s sanctifying grace.

BAPTISM

Baptism is normally associated with saving grace. It is the sacrament of initiation, marking our identification with and inclusion in the saved community of disciples of Christ. Unlike the Eucharist, which is intended to be celebrated regularly by disciples, baptism is intended to be celebrated once in the life of each disciple. Nevertheless, we shouldn’t overlook the potential of this sacrament as a continuing means of sanctifying grace – grace for the journey.
The sacrament of baptism is intended to be celebrated only once, but it is not to be forgotten thereafter. On the contrary, remembering the significance of baptism to our Christian identity should be a part of our everyday Christian walk. By remembering I mean more than mere recollection of a past event. The ancient Greek word for remembering, anamnesis, literally means "un-forgetting." Through distraction and inattention, we may easily "forget" who we are in Christ. That doesn't mean we can't recall that identity, but rather that we may fail to live with effective awareness of it. Our identity in Christ should be formative and transformative—it should be a point of conscious and continual orientation.

Remembering our baptism (and baptismal identity) should be a significant part of every celebration of the sacrament of baptism. That is, the service should intentionally and purposefully address not only the baptismal candidates but all those who have been baptized. Recalling our baptismal identity in Christ should also be a recurring point of reference in our normal worship. Roman Catholicism practices a rite of "aspiration," which involves sprinkling the congregation with water to remind them of their baptism. In fact, the practice of dipping hands in holy water as congregants enter the sanctuary is implicitly a reminder of baptism. We, too, need to be regularly reminded of our baptism and what it means for us. Baptism reminds us (helps us "un-forget") of our identity in Christ.

**THE LORD'S SUPPER (EUCHARIST)**

The Lord's Supper (or Eucharist) is the sacrament that clearly serves as a resource for the Christian journey. It is more than a remembrance or celebration of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. It reminds us of Jesus' saving work in a way that makes it present and real. The Supper serves us in at least two ways—as a means of spiritual sustenance and transformative grace.

In the Lord's Supper, we expect Christ's very presence. John Wesley affirmed that His presence is not caused by the celebration of the sacrament. That is, Christ is not present because He must be present when the sacrament is celebrated but because He chooses, readily, to be present. This means that whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we can and should boldly believe that Christ is present with and for us.

The Lord's Supper offers "food for the journey." The imagery of bread and cup communicates the image of a meal. Just as we tangibly receive the material elements in this sacrament, so we receive the sustenance of grace that spiritually "feeds" us and sustains us. While the material signs are meager and plain, we understand them as figures of the bountiful feast that Christ invites us to share. We should not see this in any magical sense but as a realization of Christ's promised presence and grace that will be with us "to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

The Lord's Supper also serves as a formative sign — the unique, repeated event that is at the center of Christian worship. In addition to signifying the presence and grace of Christ, the Lord's Supper also rehearses the core identity and pattern for the Christian faith. We are reminded not only of Christ's identity but of our own identity as His people. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly, with intentionality and meaning, it serves as a point of "calibration" or alignment, calling us to remember who we are in Christ. This means that the celebration of the Lord's Supper has rich application if we will explore its meaning. Let me suggest a few points of connection and application.

The Lord's Supper reminds us of the Christian understanding of the material world. The reality of divine grace is revealed in the use of common material elements. For the early Gnostics, the Lord's Supper was unacceptable because they rejected God's direct creation of the world and held all material reality as contrary to the pure spirituality of their notion of God. For them, this world was a reality to deny and escape in their spiritual quest. For Christians, our faith is in our Creator God and in the Incarnate Christ. Grace and blessing are expressed in and through material reality. This means that we should properly value and appreciate the material world and bodily life. The material elements of the Lord's Supper remind us of this.

The Lord's Supper also reminds us that in Christ we are His community of kingdom people. In the early church, celebrants recalled that the bread of the Supper reminds us that we are "many grains, but one loaf." In our diversity, we come to unity in Christ. This is practiced in the Supper as we all receive the elements together — all receive the same bread, the same cup, and the same grace. Places of privilege do not exist at the table because we are all undeserving recipients of the merits of Christ and His redemption. Our status and place are defined in relation to Christ and His cross and not our wealth, social standing,
or status. In these times of challenging social divisions, the Lord’s Supper offers a powerful and relevant counter-message to the world if we will hear it.

Furthermore, the Lord’s Supper invites us into an anticipatory celebration of the great banquet when the promise of redemption and restoration will be finally and completely realized. We are transported from our own time and place to Christ’s heavenly table. We find ourselves seated together with all the saints who have gone before us: Mark, John, Paul, John Wesley, Phineas Bresee, etc. all feast with us as the great cloud of witnesses. We are reminded that in the future Christ is preparing for us all, sorrow will be past and the promise of Christ’s reign will be realized.

We, too, are being — and will be — changed. My first theology teacher, Rob Staples, liked to tell the story of a man’s visit to heaven and hell. Escorted by St. Peter, he was first taken to witness the misery of hell. As they approached the great doors, he could hear the moans and cries of suffering. As the doors were opened, he saw a great banquet hall. Long tables were filled with every kind of food, the sights and aromas tantalizing. Along each side of the tables, men and women sat, unable to enjoy the feast. Their arms were long, stretching across the tables, without any elbows that would allow them to take and eat. Their torment was agonizing. “Take me from this place,” the man cried.

Then St. Peter took him to the doors of heaven. He could hear the laughter and joyful sounds of celebration and fellowship. Anxiously he watched as the doors were opened. Before him he saw a great banquet feast. Tables stretched as far as he could see, loaded with every kind of food, tantalizing in its sight and aromas. And along each side, men and women sat with arms stretching across the tables, again without elbows. Unable to feed themselves, they were feeding each other, laughing and rejoicing at the great feast. Heaven is not just a matter of a different location but also different people. The Lord’s Supper can teach us how to live together in such a way that we are prepared for the great banquet.

Discipleship is a lifelong journey that is often challenging and difficult. To help us along the way, God has provided us the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as helpful means of His grace — His unending, sanctifying grace.

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BEHOLD, I WAS BROUGHT FORTH IN INIQUITY, AND IN SIN DID MY MOTHER CONCEIVE ME.

PSALM 51:5
SANCTIFICATION AND ORIGINAL SIN

by GIFT MTUKWA

REINHOLD NIEBUHR ONCE STATED THAT ORIGINAL SIN "IS the only empirically verifiable doctrine of the Christian faith."1 By this he meant that we only need to look at human history to believe in the reality of original sin. This doctrine goes all the way back to the garden of Eden where we encounter our first parents—Adam and Eve. In Romans 3:23, Paul made clear that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Paul described sin as “missing the mark.” According to Paul, this is the state of all of humanity. The fact that humanity falls short of the glory of God means that it has failed to live in the image and likeness of God.2 As such, sanctification or holiness refers to God’s restoration of our souls so that we may accurately reflect the divine image.

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An understanding of sin should be based on a proper understanding of humanity. In the Hebrew understanding, when God created the adam (humankind) it was "flesh" (basar). It is basar that is animated by the spirit (ruach) of God. In Genesis chapter 3, disobedience is the cause of the human "condition of weakness and mortality." This is not to say that flesh is evil—it is still part of God's good creation, but it has been marred by sin. In the New Testament, the word "flesh" translates to the Greek word sark. Even though the flesh is not evil, one is not to live "according to the flesh" (kata sarka) or have "the mind of the flesh" (phronema sarkos). Having flesh is not sinful: it is living for the flesh, being motivated by merely human goals and values; in short, it is a self-centred mindset that is sinful.5

John Wesley spoke of this self-centeredness when he wrote, "And thus man was created looking directly to God, as his last end; but, falling into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself." The solution to this self-centeredness is "a new affection: love excluding sin."7

Even after we have been saved and sanctified, the effect of original sin and fallenss still remains. Wesley was aware that imperfections and infirmities would still remain within the Christian life even after salvation, but that the willful transgression of a known law of God can and should be avoided by one who has experienced God's love. This distinction helps us as Wesleyans to affirm "that sin is not inevitable, necessary, or perpetual in the Christian life." We will always remain as fallen creatures with disordered physiological drives. Furthermore, we are still shaped by our upbringing and family and cultural contexts, of which even the most Christian homes and cultures still have their dysfunctions. But for the Christian, the grace of God through the power of the Spirit purifies the intentions of our hearts so as to avoid willfully transgressing God's law.

The removal of inbred sin is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. For Wesley, the infilling of love was the end of sanctification. As such, Wesley's perspective has love as its focus and not sin. The love Wesley spoke of was love of God and love of neighbor—from new birth, love increases in the believer's life until he or she reaches maturity. Wesley was aware that "love excludes sin" and such a heart certainly leaves no space for sin. In this sense, holiness "has a positive content."13

Wesley never regarded sin as having the final word. God offers victory over sin with full salvation. Wesley stated "It is
properly a conviction, wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the sin which still remains in our heart, of the phronema sarkos, the carnal mind, which does still remain… although it does no longer reign… the tendency of our heart to self-will, to Atheism, or idolatry; and, above all, to unbelief.15 In trying to understand sanctification within hearts influenced by original sin, we should resist the temptation to “make this the basis for a doctrine of Christian sanctification.”16 Doing so would be tantamount to trying “to understand light in terms of darkness”—it is sin which must be understood in terms of holiness and not the other way around.17 However, since we are cleansed from sin, the connection between sanctification and original sin ought to be considered seriously. Sin itself is indeed “the greatest threat to holiness.”18

The doctrine of grace is crucial to a Wesleyan understanding of original sin. Wesley was aware that growth in grace results in deeper awareness of the reality of what he called “inbred sin.” Wesley wrote:

The conviction we feel of inbred sin is deeper and deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and the love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ…the more do we discern of our alienation from God, of

We ought not to think of sanctification and justification as happening one after the other. For Wesley, “the beginning of sanctification is at the new birth, the moment of regeneration, which is simultaneous with justification.”20 It must be clear, however, that while sanctification has begun, it is not complete at this stage. Holiness for Wesley entailed “being cleansed from sin, from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1).21

It is clear that a Wesleyan theology cannot properly articulate an understanding of sanctification without relating it to the doctrine of original sin. It is because humanity is sinful by nature that it needs to be sanctified through and through. The restoration of humanity in the image of God is the goal of Christianity.

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TRANSFORMATION OF A FAMILY TREE

by SCOTT SESSIONS
MY GREAT GRANDFATHER WAS A SHARECROPPER in Southeastern Alabama, near the Georgia state line. He rented a small piece of land to work, and in return, he would give a portion of his crop to the landowner at the end of each year. My great grandfather decided he wanted a better life for his family than the poverty-stricken fields in the deep South, so he found a job in the cotton mill. Later, my grandfather began working there as well. After one shift, my grandfather realized that was not where he wanted to spend his life—he wanted to continue the pattern of making life better for his family. So together with my great grandfather, he built a concrete block building and opened a small grocery store in hopes of pursuing a more prosperous life.

In its early days, the store developed a certain reputation. It became the spot for anything sinful that went on in town—drinking, smoking, gambling, fighting, and more. Needless to say, my family was hopelessly lost without God. In fact, my father was nine years old the first time he walked inside of a church.

ASK OF ME, AND I WILL MAKE THE NATIONS YOUR HERITAGE, AND THE ENDS OF THE EARTH YOUR POSSESSION.

PSALM 2:8
building. But the trajectory of my family tree changed one day when some local Nazarenes stopped by my grandfather's store and invited him to revival. They were persistent, and he agreed to attend the revival if they would agree to leave him alone.

The revival services were lively, Spirit-filled meetings. The men of the church would frequently meet down by the river on Friday nights and pray for people by name to come to know Christ. People were being saved, sanctified, delivered, healed, and called into ministry. Even the managers and supervisors at the cotton mills loved revival because they would see a lot of stolen tools returned after the services. When people's lives are being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, the community sits up and takes notice.

The grace of God was already at work in my grandfather's life, and it pierced through his calloused heart when he attended that revival service. He heard that Jesus could forgive him of all the things he had done wrong in his life; he was drawn to that message of hope. He repented of his sins and received Jesus as his Savior. The next evening, he told his family they were all going back to church for revival. They sensed something different in the sound of his voice. The message that night was on entire sanctification, and my grandfather heard a message of full salvation — a message of hope and of deliverance from all sin and selfishness in the human heart. The minister preached about allowing God to cleanse our heart, fill us with His Spirit, and make us whole. During the altar call at the end of the service, a nice gentleman in the church made his way over to my grandfather. He said, “Bud, would you like to go pray and be sanctified?” My grandfather said, “I'm not sure what that means, but if it's anything like I got last night, I want all of it!” At that moment, he fully surrendered his will to the Lord and was gloriously sanctified.

Within six months, my grandfather had given up all his addictions and was teaching the men's Bible class in church. Though he may not have been able to articulate the prevenient, saving, sanctifying grace of God in theological terms, he had an unmistakable experience with God that transformed his life. It also changed the life of my grandmother, my father, my mother, my aunts and uncles, my siblings, my cousins, and even my own life and the lives of my children. It forever changed the trajectory of our family tree. Before my grandmother surrendered her life to the Lord, she was so bashful that when she saw someone she knew in town, she would cross the street to keep from having to walk past them on the sidewalk. Shortly after she was saved and sanctified, she began teaching the women's Bible class. She loved and cared for those ladies like no one else and would regularly have as many as 150 women in her Sunday school class as a result. The transformation in her life was nothing short of amazing.

My grandfather answered the call to preach in the early 1950s. When he went before the credentials board for ordination, one of the elders asked him: “Bud, don't you think at 44 you're a little too old to go into the ministry?” He replied, “Well, Noah preached for 100 years and all he saved was his
family. So if I do that well, I’ll be fine.” My grandfather only finished the 6th grade, but he had deep wisdom about how to lead people to Christ and how to reach the community for His Kingdom. To this day, I still run into people who were saved under the ministry of my grandfather and hear stories of families that were impacted by his ministry all over the state of Alabama. Unfortunately, I never knew him. My grandfather died the year before I was born, but the Lord had placed a call to preach on his son’s life. My father answered that call shortly after I was born.

My dad, who stepped inside a church for the first time at nine years old, made sure life was different for me and my siblings. We rarely saw life outside of the church. My parents were living examples of what it meant to live Spirit-filled lives. They sold everything they had and invested their lives in starting a new church in Columbiana, Alabama. Soon after, people began to notice that lives were changing. A man on probation for manslaughter, the pool hall owner, and people in the bondage of addiction were accepting Christ, experiencing renewal, and some even called to ministry. People were being set free from sin and sanctified wholly—and the whole town was paying attention.

From my grandfather to my father, the message of full salvation continued to transform lives from the inside, and it was evident on the outside. I accepted Jesus into my life at seven and was sanctified and Spirit-filled at 18. However, for 10 years, I wrestled with a call to preach—after all, my grandfather was a pastor; my dad was a pastor; the last thing I wanted to be was a pastor! At the age of 28, I finally said “yes” to preach full salvation—that God wants to sanctify us through and through and that if we confess our sins, He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). God has blessed me with a wonderful wife and partner in ministry for the past twenty years. He has given us four children that have truly been blessings, keeping us humble and on our knees in prayer. The sanctified life is more than a theological concept to understand or a doctrine to teach—it has been the lifeblood of my family for four generations now. I can’t imagine where I would be if the Nazarenes wouldn’t have come knocking on my grandparents’ door.

My father recently shared with me his perspective on the difference between my grandfather’s day and the day we live in now. He said that back then, they had an experience with the Lord but did not really know what to call it when referring to entire sanctification. Today, we know what to call it and can articulate it very well, but rarely do we really experience it. I think he is right. I am hopeful we will rediscover the mission for which Christ died, “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). I am hopeful we will rediscover the transforming message of entire sanctification and holy living in this present age. I am hopeful that families will continue to accept God’s transforming power in their lives. I am forever grateful my grandfather did!

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O LORD, I LOVE THE HABITATION OF YOUR HOUSE AND THE PLACE WHERE YOUR GLORY DWELLS.

PSALM 26:8
JAMES K.A. SMITH OPENS HIS WONDERFUL and ground-breaking book on worship and formation, *Desiring the Kingdom*, by inviting readers to imagine that alien anthropologists from Mars come to earth to study every aspect of humanity. Because they are especially interested in what humanity worships and venerates, they follow a large group of people into what they believe to be a sanctuary.
The Martians assume it must be an important place of worship because it has so many cars in the parking lot, and once inside, there are no clocks on the wall (so people can lose themselves in worship), and the only windows into the building are in the ceiling (inviting everyone’s gaze upward toward heaven).

For several pages, Smith describes all the various aspects of worship and adoration discovered by the alien researchers: the liturgical colors change with the seasons; maps (like bulletins or worship folders) are available to guide one’s spiritual journey; acolytes and priests are present to welcome worshipers to help them find (in the “racks”) what they are looking for and to receive their offerings. Most significantly, in this great cathedral, there are numerous chapels open to worshippers, each aligned with iconic windows. However, rather than having flat one-dimensional windows (like stained-glass windows) offering transcendent views of the holy, these chapels have unique three-dimensional figures in their windows, offering robust pictures of the good life.

It takes the reader only a couple of pages to realize that, in Smith’s very descriptive illustration, the alien anthropologists have inadvertently followed their human subjects into a shopping mall and not into a church. The point is clear. The local shopping mall is not just a neutral space to buy things—it is, in many ways, also a place of worship, a place that shapes our imagination, captures our heart, and tries to teach us what to love.

The point of James Smith’s alien story is not just that we should all be aware of the way the
shopping mall is trying to form our desires and loves; it also reminds us that all day, every day, we are participating in practices that are forming our hearts. Similarly, we must remember that a key purpose for attending worship in Christian sanctuaries is to understand God-ordained practices that teach us to desire and seek first the kingdom of God and form our hearts in Him.

Nazarenes have a word for when we learn to seek first the kingdom of God with our whole being and when our hearts are formed wholly in the love of God: sanctification. However, sometimes in focusing on the crisis of deciding to be made holy, holiness people have failed to remember the important role that practices (particularly worship practices) play in the ongoing sanctification, transformation, and re-habiting of a person’s life.

In his great sermon on “The Means of Grace,” John Wesley wrote, “All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means he hath ordained.” When one reads Wesley’s sermons, letters, and other reflections on worship and the “means of grace,” one finds him caught in a bit of a conundrum. On the one hand, Wesley openly rejects the coldness of religious formalism. In his sermon, he decries those who “mistake the means for the end.” He pities those who focus on “doing those outward works, [rather] than in a heart renewed after the image of God.” In other words, Wesley recognizes that the practices of worship can become empty rituals devoid of the Spirit’s transforming power.

However, on the other hand, Wesley sees the rejection of those practices of worship (means of grace) as failing to obey God’s clear command. Such omissions miss opportunities for God’s Spirit to continue transforming believers. For Wesley, by participating in these “outward signs, words, or actions” one opens oneself to the “preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” of God. To put it simply, while Wesley was suspicious of and rejected formal religion that failed to bring about inner transformation, he nevertheless thought of no better methods (he was a “Method-ist” after all) than the historical sacraments and practices – rightly used – for receiving and experiencing the ongoing sanctifying work of the Spirit in life.

All news, information networks, websites, and social media will have inherent bias. Most of these mediums of information have built-in algorithms that are designed to feed us information that agrees with our own viewpoint. This reality can lead individuals to have completely different worldviews from each other based on what content they consume. The competing and dominating voices of the world can squeeze our imaginations and perspectives into their mold. Worship invites God’s people to be sanctified – set apart – so that we can stop being squeezed into those molds but rather be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:2). In thinking about worship and its connection to the work of sanctifying grace, my intention is not to turn people into liturgical worshippers. However, we need to pay attention to the missing opportunities for formation and sanctification because of either neglect or absence of the historic means of grace. We also need to pay attention to the ways we are shaped by less formal worship traditions, i.e., informal worship practices with extemporaneous prayers.

In one of my theology classes, I ask students to attend a more formal worship service, i.e., liturgical rituals and ceremonies with written prayers. The goal of this assignment is not to decide whether they “like” this kind of worship. For me, that question is irrelevant. Rather, I have them reflect on what the various worship practices are trying to do to them. Here is the kind of question I have them reflect on: “If I were to attend this church for 10 years, how would this worship change me?”

I think that is the question people desiring to be holy should be asking more often. I believe we usually evaluate our worship experience around questions like, “Did I like this?” or “Did I agree with everything?” Perhaps the question that holiness people should be asking is, “how is my regular participation in the means of grace forming me to love God more fully and my neighbor more completely?” To that question, John Wesley would say, “Amen.”

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2. Ibid.
THE GRACE OF GOD IN REGENERATING THOSE DEAD IN SIN

by GABRIEL BENJIMAN
Regeneration is an act of God who, by grace, gives new life to those who are dead in sin. The worldwide body of faith identified as the Church of the Nazarene accepts that God graciously livens those who have been spiritually dead in sin. Essentially, regeneration addresses the idea that a person is given new life through the love of the Father, the complete and finished work of Christ on the cross, and the resurrection work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). In one inclusive and simultaneous work, a person who was dead in sin can be made alive through faith and awakened by God’s grace. Faith, justification, confession, repentance, regeneration, forgiveness, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit become realities for the new believer in this order of salvation (Ordo Salutis).

In framing the Ordo Salutis within a Wesleyan perspective, the concept of regeneration fits within the broader conversations on salvation. Conversations on regeneration (sometimes described as salvation, conversion, initial sanctification, or being born again) center on the new birth of the repentant believer’s spiritual and moral nature.

John Wesley talked about justification and the new birth as being a simultaneous work of God’s grace in the new believer’s life. A person is justified and is made alive to spiritual and moral life, thereby being capable of faith, love, and obedience. Therefore, regeneration in the broadest sense entails an awakening grace that brings a person into a saving relationship with God. This “spiritual resurrection” also strongly convicts us of the depth of our separation from God.

In Isaiah chapter 6, the prophet’s vision of the holiness of God convicted him of his own uncleanliness and those of the people around him. Only after God cleansed the prophet’s lips could he commit himself as God’s instrument to carry His message to a people living in sin. Through this encounter, Isaiah was saved and empowered to be an instrument for God. In the broadest sense, therefore, some may speak of regeneration as salvation. Many may see regeneration in the New Testament as being born again or being saved (John 3).

I am ethnically considered Asian. However, I have only been exposed to Western education, and I am indigenously South African. Culturally and religiously, most South Africans are exposed to indigenous African religions (most of it a deep-seated pantheism): Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Fitting within this mixed bag of customs and religious pluralism, I can attest to the reality, even into my later teen years, of being religiously astute and aware but not spiritually alive.

Most youths of color learned to survive in the townships. Even though my family was considered Christian, I did not know what it meant to be a believer in Christ until one day in a Nazarene church when a dedicated preacher of holiness preached about Isaiah’s spiritual awakening.

As an 18-year-old, I was desperately seeking relief from deep-seated anger, bitterness, shame, and guilt. I was raised in an environment of bitterness, guilt, and shame, which meant suffocating one’s self-expressions and tolerating other races and religions. Expressions of hugs and “I love you” were not shared at all in most of our homes. Perhaps it was because of the harsh realities of earning a meager living within a crushing regime of racism that love was not a commonly used language. The future was bleak, and I was hungry for political activism and religious pacifism in my community. The society in which I grew up focused on business, career, and ambition. At the intersection of these immensely pressurizing crosswinds, God reached out to me by His grace alone and awakened deep convictions of faith and belief in Him, resurrecting the spiritual and moral being in me to new life. Love was most evident in this urging grace. His grace regenerated within me a life of love left long latent within me. It was transforming to discover this love that had no attachments or conditions.

The love of God brought no thought of material improvements or prosperity and no sense of expectation or reciprocation. It brought the freedom to simply be. It tore back a heavy curtain on my identity and revealed a personal worth beyond entitlement and demand. God’s message revealed that I was worth saving—I was worth His image in me. This is perhaps best articulated by the words of the hymn writer: “That God should love a sinner such as I. Should yearn to change my sorrow into bliss…”

On that glorious day after hearing the sermon about Isaiah, I understood that simply tolerating others would not give me a life worth living. I understood that I could be loved (not just cared for), and that I could love others (not simply tolerate them); this was truly life altering for me. God’s love was a light that filled my heart. His love replaced tolerance, the blind acceptance of injustice, and political determinism. For the first time, I was consumed by the idea of choosing to love others. I was awakened to love by grace. I let go of tolerating others and, by faith, chose to love others. My friendships with people from diverse religions and races flourished.

I was truly awakened by grace. It was as though I was looking at what was previously dark, only now, someone had shone a light into that utter darkness, and it took on form and shape. I could

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4. Greathouse, An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology, 92.
see into the darkness of my anger and hurt. Hope and love shone brightly into my future. I believed that God could and would inhabit my life fully and entirely.

I believed that God gave Himself to me out of unobligated love as much as I could comprehend and receive. I have called this experience “being re-Genesis’d.”

Regeneration rewrote my creation story. I was born again.

In the year that followed, I began to find ways to serve my community. I looked for ways to study the Word of God—this new way of life was characterized by a voracious appetite to study the Bible. I read anything I could find about the Bible, and I developed a curiosity about how the Bible would make sense for my daily living. While living out this new reality, I realized that God was always readily offering more of Himself, but I was not often willing to give up my preferences and privileges for God. It ultimately came down to a career choice. I was a student of law—a career I had wanted as long as I could remember. I sensed that I was being drawn to the wealth and political influence this career could provide for one who was previously disadvantaged under a grueling system of structured racism. I could have used the position as a lawyer to attend to the injustice that surrounded my life.

However, I sensed an even greater compulsion of a certain powerlessness in my pursuit of a law degree. I felt that not everything seemingly legal was ethical and that God was inviting me into His way of serving. It was the beginning of a new realization that I lacked knowledge but needn’t burden myself with knowing everything. This new mindset called for a total surrender of my life to His trustworthiness. I sensed a call to deeper obedience and consecration. I realized then the need to fully commit all of my past, present, and future to the grace of God that was already at work in me.

As we grow in grace and Christian maturity, we must be reminded of the sanctifying power of the Spirit. We cannot look at our efforts as anything that merits God’s forgiveness but rather as a thank offering for what He has done. Our response to His will is made possible through the gift of being reborn. I am reminded daily that I am a child of God, and because of His atoning sacrifice, I am set free from all human constraints. I exist in His glorious freedom as He intended me to be.

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THEREFORE, I URGE YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IN VIEW OF GOD’S MERCY, TO OFFER YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD — THIS IS YOUR TRUE AND PROPER WORSHIP.

ROMANS 12:1
CONSECRATION:

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUST, DEVOTION AND PASSION, SURRENDER AND SERVICE

by ÁGATHA HEAP

**CORAM DEO IS A LATIN EXPRESSION THAT MEANS ONE IS**
before the face of God. What happens when we are in the presence of God? In Isaiah chapter 6, we see the prophet before God: *Coram Deo*. This experience incites despair in him. As he faced the Lord, he was so aware of his impurity that he thought he would not be able to continue living. “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). This is no ordinary event. This encounter ushers transformation, commitment, and sanctification.
The world is hurting. People are afraid. Human plans and certainties have disappeared. As Christians, we are called to live in this world yet with a perspective beyond it—beyond its suffering and wounds. What an irresistible invitation! We are invited to live a supernatural life: “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). Eternity has begun! It is an entrance to a reign that promises peace beyond our understanding and a more excellent way based on a love that is not envious, selfish, controlling, or rude (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8). However, the challenge is to be whole as we walk in the Way.

Historically, the hope since the first Industrial Revolution is that machines would make our lives easier and better. In many respects this is true; from a purely material perspective, the Industrial Revolution has provided a more convenient and opulent world. However, as time goes by, some people choose to work longer hours such that they never seem to have sufficient time to satisfy all their needs and desires. More recently, we have experienced an informational revolution. Technology has provided greater access to every corner of the world, and new information can be shared in a matter of seconds. People can talk and see one another in real time; even though this virtual sphere is abstract and intangible, it is very real. It can occupy and absorb our lives. This means we can be eating in a restaurant with a friend but communicating with someone else on the other side of town or on the other side of the world through digital media. Our bodies might be in one location, but our minds can travel to distant places to engage in dialogues, businesses, and relationships with others who are geographically far away.

The very first question the Lord asked Adam was: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). Of course, the Lord knew the answer. However, Adam and Eve needed to realize where they were. They were hiding because of their guilt from disobedience and shame. Centuries later, even now, God continues to ask each of us: Where are you?

While technological advancement allows us the convenience to work simultaneously from anywhere with individuals from different parts of the world, we might feel that it’s possible for us to be in two, three, or even more places in our spiritual life as well, but that is not true. What does this have to do with consecration? Consecration is surrender, devotion, offering, adoration—it is wholeness. But if we are fragmented, we are offering only pieces of ourselves to our families, our jobs, and especially, to God. Consecration means total commitment, undivided attention, and passionate dedication. Are we able to do this?

What hinders us from true consecration: “trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword?” (Romans 8:35). Or is it occupation, social media, selfishness, individualism, greed, envy, dissatisfaction; in short, idolatry? Do we trust God? Do we know God?
We want to declare that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39), but we separate ourselves from Him when we are distressed and worried over earthly things. We walk away from the Lord when we are distracted, divided, and hungry for things that neither satisfy nor sustain us.

We need to hear and remember God’s call to us in Isaiah 55:1-3:

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.

James’ letter reminds us of the consequences of doubting God and being double-minded (James 1:6-8). Solomon, the wise teacher, reminds us that our eyes should look straight ahead (Proverbs 4:25). Consecration involves focus, choice, direction, and faithfulness.

Consecration is a key step in our journey of grace. “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8). The invitation to draw near involves a complete work of purification.

It is a step of knowledge and trust. Martha knew who Jesus was and what He was able to do. When her brother was sick, she called for Jesus. When Lazarus died, she ran to Jesus and declared: “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:21-22). Jesus assured her that He is the resurrection and the life, and she replied that she believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God (v. 25-27). She knew; she trusted.

Consecration is a step of devotion and passion—a desire to do beyond what is required from God. It is a place of voluntary submission because we are passionate for God. One day, a woman who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at a Pharisee’s house in that town, “so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them” (Luke 7:37-38). This woman’s great love for Jesus was shown in this act of devotion.

Consecration is a step of total surrender. Consecration leads to a sincere desire of giving our most precious things to the Lord, meaning we are giving all that is in us. “While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table... Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me” (Matthew 26:6-10). Breaking the vase of an expensive perfume signifies surrendering all in an act of worship and adoration.

Finally, consecration is a step that implores us to love wholly and serve passionately. God expects us to love Him “...with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). The Good Samaritan in Jesus’ story risked his safety, committed his time, used his strength, and invested his money to care for the other (Luke 10:25-37). Likewise, when we love God wholeheartedly, serve passionately, and give generously, we experience great joy!

Consecration is the decision to be whole in the presence of God. This is the way to have life and have it fully and abundantly (John 10:10); Coram Deo — is where we need to be.

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LAST SPRING, AS I WALKED THROUGH OUR GARDEN, I WAS thrilled to see the fast-growing tomato plants and the size of the fruit they produced. After several weeks of tending, weeding, and watering, the day came when the tomatoes were ripe and ready to pick. Walking carefully through the tomato vines, I picked several plump, red tomatoes; I thought back to my childhood and the big, lush gardens my parents grew. They always enjoyed gardening, and the fruit from their efforts was a blessing to our family as we sat down to enjoy meals together.

When we consider the care and nurture gardeners must provide to help their plants grow, we see several parallels between horticultural care and the process of intentional nurturing in the life of the sanctified Christian. If we desire to grow spiritually and bear fruit—and this should be our constant goal—we must recognize that we play a part in the growth process. Of course, we understand that our spiritual growth comes from God.
DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF YOUR MIND, THAT BY TESTING YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD, WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT.

ROMANS 12:2

God germinates the seed and causes the plant to grow (1 Corinthians 3:7). He produces the small bloom that develops into the ripened fruit. Yet He also invites us to cooperate with Him in this process of developing a mature character.

God longs to redeem and transform every aspect of our lives. Even after we are sanctified, the Holy Spirit is at work to transform the immature and unloving tendencies of our personalities. It’s never appropriate to say, “Oh, that’s just him,” or “she’s just that way.” Holiness should affect every part of our lives, changing the ways we speak, think, and respond to others; it should help us to watch the attitudes we harbor.

Sanctification takes place in relationship with God. He purifies and energizes this relationship while we give of ourselves in devotion to Him. Our response in faith brings us to the point of entire sanctification. Entire sanctification is the moment when the Spirit of God purifies the hearts of justified believers. God is willing and waiting to do His work if we will consecrate ourselves to Him and enter into this work of grace by faith.

When a husband and wife gaze into each other’s eyes and share their vows with each other on their wedding day, they realize that their marriage is just starting. This is similar to the spiritual encounter we experience when we consecrate everything to God and ask Him to sanctify us by faith. Both of these covenant relationships need to grow and mature; they also require us to develop a deeper, sacrificial love.

In Stephen S. White’s introduction to T.M. Anderson’s book, After Sanctification: Growth in the Life of Holiness, he recalls something that Anderson once said in a sermon: “Entire sanctification is an end; but is not only an end, it is also a beginning. It is an end to sin in the soul and the beginning of a life of spiritual development which should be exceptional.”

This spiritual development is what we call growth in grace. This spiritual growth should cause the fruit of the Spirit to be developed in our lives. In fact, the litmus test of the sanctified heart should be that the fruit of the Spirit is being formed in us daily. God’s love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-


control should be more evident in our lives today than they were a few months ago or even last week.

In chapter 4 of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus told His disciples the parable of the sower. The different types of soil in the story represent the varied hearts of listeners: hearts similar to a hardened path, hearts that are laden with rocks, and hearts that allow weeds to choke the sown Word, stunting any growth. The only heart that Jesus commends is the fertile heart; it is free of rocks and weeds, allowing the seed to germinate, grow, and flourish. This should be the goal of the sanctified heart, representing the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s consider some ways that we can cooperate with God, allowing His grace to cultivate and transform our lives. John Wesley taught that by regularly observing the means of grace, a person can cooperate with God in His work of redemption and transformation. Just as God’s grace enables a person to believe in Him and draws the unrepentant person to His love, His sanctifying grace continues to transform us after we have been entirely sanctified. Wesley understood “outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace.”

When we make prayer a priority, study Scripture, experience Christ in the Eucharist, and participate in corporate worship and discipleship groups, we position ourselves better to receive God’s grace that sanctifies us. These practices, or spiritual disciplines, allow the Holy Spirit greater freedom to speak to us and bring us to a place where transformation and spiritual maturity can easily occur. Now more than ever, the world needs to see holiness lived out by God’s people. God desires for us to grow in grace, resulting in Christlike lives in the world.

In the third chapter of Colossians, Paul tells the church then, and now, that mature Christians must make wise lifestyle choices. He says that we should get rid of the sinful (earthly) nature and clothe ourselves with God’s character, love, and forgiveness. God’s grace is our source for spiritual growth and maturity. We also have His Word and the Christian community as resources to join Him in this process of growth.

Practicing these spiritual disciplines is as essential to the soul as fertilizing and cultivating the soil are for gardens. May we be willing participants in our own spiritual formation and a constant source of help and encouragement to others as we grow together in grace.

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Jewish tradition refers to Deuteronomy 6:4-5 as the Shema. Shema is a Hebrew word that means “hear” and is the first word in this Jewish text: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Jesus, of course, quoted the Shema when He was asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” Adding the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), Jesus revealed that all of the other commandments flow from these two — love God and love others.

These two commands continue to hold the most vital place in the hearts of holiness people today. As Nazarenes, we hold firmly to the belief in the work of entire sanctification. It was part of the reason for the birth of the Church of the Nazarene in 1908. The Manual states, “We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotion to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.” Loving God and loving others are the greatest expressions of the life of an entirely sanctified believer.

What I found particularly interesting in studying Deuteronomy 6 is that immediately following the Shema is a strong admonition to parents: “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Moses called parents in the Israelite community to teach this fully surrendered life to their children!

I began to reflect on whether or not Christian parents are impressing the fully surrendered life in God on their children as Moses instructed. I have heard parents plead to God for the salvation of their children. They teach their children to pray and learn Scripture. And, praise the Lord, I’ve seen parents often lead their children into saving faith in Jesus.

In 26 years of pastoring, however, I must admit that I have not seen this same passion and intentionality in parents for helping their children experience God’s grace in entire sanctification. While we believe in this second work of grace, sadly we don’t seem as committed to helping our children experience the joy of walking in such a wonderful relationship of full surrender to God. I don’t hear parents pleading with God for their children to be entirely sanctified. I rarely hear testimonies of children who have entered this wonderful relationship of the abundant life in Christ. Think about this for a moment. Do we want our children to know the forgiveness of sins but to never experience the “holy obedience of love made perfect”?

My wife, Jenni, and I want to declare our desire for both our daughters, Bekah and Sarah, to experience not only the grace of salvation in Christ but also the Holy Spirit’s work of entire sanctification. We pray that our girls “may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). We earnestly pray, “night and day . . . that we may . . . supply what is lacking in [their] faith” (1 Thessalonians 3:10). We pray that “the God of peace, [will] sanctify [our daughters] through and through. May [their] whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We commit to impressing this on our children and calling other parents to do the same. We receive this responsibility personally as parents, and we commit to discipling our children through the entire journey of grace!

Will you join with us in making this commitment to intentional parenting?

Scott Rainey is global director of Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International.

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