

Definitive Sanctification Within Paul's Indicative-Imperative: Proposing an Evangelical Moral Transformational Framework for Human Flourishing

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Abstract

At its core, sanctification is an act of the trinitarian God by which the believer and the believing community have been made the sole possession of God, to do his bidding in his presence according to his glorious purpose. Having been separate to God, the believer has been made holy. This status is conferred upon all believers at the point of their conversion. God, the Father chose us for salvation through sanctification. It is God's will that we should be sanctified (1Th.4:3) through Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God; that means our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1Co.1:30). The Gentiles are an offering acceptable to God through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Rm.15:16). Our dependency upon the Trinity for sanctification is prompted by our dependency on God for salvation. The reverse is also true. Thus, in this paper we are positing that sanctification is a soteriological reality and definitive.

How do we as Evangelicals, approach the concept of human flourishing in terms of moral transformation when we hold a definitive view of sanctification? How do we hold our eschatological and mystical realities of salvation in tension by applying the Pauline Indicative-Imperative? The Indicative-Imperative relevance must demonstrate the interplay of Dependency-Responsibility in the application of grace and faith. It must also demonstrate an ecclesiology of Identity-Responsibility because human flourishing is corporate, and which becomes meaningful to us as God's possession, workmanship, and dwelling. This is especially true when we align ourselves relationally and vocationally with God's agenda for his people. We are asking for imperative relevance. The imperative relevance must translate into a moral transformational framework that is truly evangelical, not a legalistic works-righteousness endeavour. Our responsibility is then really one of obedient dependency on the glorious grace of God. Human flourishing in the community will be a natural and logical outcome of sanctification.

1. Introduction

With human flourishing in mind, the purpose of this paper is to propose a moral transformational framework for evangelical communities. Since human flourishing is only possible in the context of community, its first task must be to create a like-minded community with common beliefs and values. Thus, our consideration is for an evangelical community or communities, who already operate within a common identity with common core values. Yes, as evangelicals we would not need to create a like-minded community, because it already exists and has a strongly defined common identity in Christ. Not only so, but as evangelicals we understand that any and every human endeavour that seeks flourishing must first identify such flourishing as a divinely mandated responsibility. Such a mandate will orient us in obedience to God, rather than to upholding an implemented system or program which is purely a human construct.

Moral transformation as a human endeavour will always risk legalistic imposition within the community. Legalistic praxis often engenders burdensome programs which have nothing to do with pleasing God or having abundant life. Legalism always lacks love. The launching pad of our approach is more about who we are than about what we must do. It is more about our identity in the trinitarian God and our dependency on him, than on some set of rules. This is the reason why I am linking my discussion with the matter of sanctification, and imperative as a natural (supernatural) orientation of who we are (Pereira 2019:4). A sense of wholeness is built on our inner contentment of being a new creation in Christ.

Moreover, human flourishing should never exclude the possibility of external hostilities; for our Lord told us that we will suffer persecution. We should still flourish, even in the face of hostility because we have embraced a relational and vocational community mindset. Let us first consider our common identity.

2. Evangelicalism as an Identity

The Evangelical Movement is very broad and diversified. Yet, it provides an important and unifying identity for many Christians. The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is central to its theological conviction. König (1998:83-86) points out that Evangelicals are often better known for a specific spirituality, namely, 1. That Jesus Christ is the only means to provide salvation; 2. That they are Christians who have had a personal experience of Jesus Christ as Savior; 3. That they have a very high view

of the Bible; 4. That they want to share their faith with others; and 5. That they believe good works were a fundamental outcome of the Christian faith. These five pillars provide evangelicals with their core identity as a community. The fifth pillar is the natural outworking of the other four and is the one we wish to apply to human flourishing.

Bloesch (1983:17ff) also articulates his view of evangelical identity. He says, that to be evangelical means to be evangelistic. They have an eschatological hope for the second coming of Christ. Their high view of the Scripture affirms its divine authority since it is God-breathed (2 Tm.3:16). They have a high view of God, affirming his sovereignty and our absolute dependence on him. They also have a high view of human beings, which drives their evangelistic effort and social involvement.

Evangelicals also have several presuppositions that influence their interpretations or hermeneutics. The divine inspiration accepts the Bible as a supernatural document, God's self-revelation (Klein 1998:320). The Bible is taken as authoritative and true. They interpret the Bible on its own terms and are open to all methods that open the biblical text's meaning. The application of the interpreted text is, as always, challenged by the "then" and "now" contexts, known as Lessing's "ugly ditch" (Pereira 2015:310). The theological relevance is the basis for contemporary application. The evangelical call is to take the Bible seriously, not subverting its intentionality. So, if we wish to propose an evangelical moral transformational framework for human flourishing, then it must be true to the biblical intention and doctrine.

Finally, we are interested in applying this discussion to evangelical communities because we admit that our focus is more oriented to right-believing at the expense of community-building or human flourishing. With our focus on sanctification, it should also express itself in the community with relational and vocational aims.

3. The Pauline Understanding of Sanctification

The basic sense of sanctification is being set apart. The sense of being set apart underlies references to holiness or sanctification in terms of position, status, relationship, where its words are translated as 'cut off', separated', 'dedicated' or 'consecrated' (Walters 1988:1068). The big issue about sanctification today is whether it is *definitive* or *progressive*. Either way, at least the doctrine allows us to recognize the difference between morality and sanctity, or holiness (Russell 2010:135), and that only God can be

the source of true sanctification. The words 'sanctification' and 'holiness' translate the same Greek word group, which carries the idea of being separated from the service of the world to the service of God; it is derived from the word 'saint' (Edwards 2011:215). In most cases, Paul uses the idea as a status conferred upon believers in Christ for sanctification and justification; in other words, it is a soteriological act of God, and placed at the beginning of the Christian life. This is also understood as *definitive* or *positional* sanctification.

A second meaning of Paul concerns the moral and spiritual transformation of the regenerated Christian, who is to be conformed to the image of Christ and, thus, in the image of God. Walters (1988:1068) sees that process in the New Testament has the thought of an inward transformation gradually taking place, resulting in purity, moral rectitude, and holy, spiritual thoughts expressing themselves in an outward life of goodness and godliness. Those who think of sanctification as transformation, think of it as progressive. Nevertheless, importantly, Walters understands that Christ is the content and norm of the sanctified life: his risen life is reproduced in the believer (1988:1069).

For us sanctification is not progressive, but it is definitive. In our quest to support that view, let us first consider the sanctification words in Paul's writings, also stating the occurrences as they relate to the Christian. By sanctification we have been set apart for God's own holy purposes (Fee 2009:627).

3.1. Sanctification Words Used in Paul

3.1.1. ἅγιος (hagios)

Strong's *G40*, sacred, pure (phys.), blameless or religious (mor.), consecrated (*cer.*) holy (most), saint.

Zodhiates (1996:1572) defines the word as holy, sacred, separated from ordinary or common usage and devoted to God. It is being brought into a relationship with God. It is used: 1. Formally, outwardly holy, identified or marked as holy, classified as belonging to God, and 2. Materially, sanctified inwardly, holy in nature and disposition, godly, devout, and pious. It describes one whose moral and spiritual character bears the image of God. Those who are sanctified materially are certainly also sanctified formally or outwardly.

Ben C. Dunson (2019:77) comments on this word, which is most

fundamentally used in the Old Testament as God is the “holy one”. The believer is to be a “holy one”, one set apart to belong to God for his special use. He sees it as the result of union with Christ. Story (2009:76) adds that the adjective is used in a cultic sense. He says that it is difficult to find references where the adjective is used to the endeavours or aspirations of Christians.

Occurrences in Paul’s Letters: Rm 1:7; 8:27; 12:1; 12:13; 15:25; 15:26; 15:31; 16:2; 16:15; 1 Cor 1:2; 3:17; 6:1; 6:2; 7:14; 7:34; 14:33; 16:1; 16:15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1; 9:12; 13:13; Eph 1:1; 1:4; 1:15; 1:18; 2:19; 2:21; 3:5; 3:8; 3:18; 4:12; 5:3; 5:27; 6:18; Phlp 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2; 1:4; 1:12; 1:22; 1:28; 3:12; 1 Th 3:13; 5:27; 2 Th 1:10; 1 Tm 1:9; 5:10; Phlm 5; 7.

3.1.2. ἁγιάζω (*hagiazō*) Strong’s *G37*, to make holy, i.e. (*cer.*) purify or consecrate; (mentally) venerate – hallow, be holy, and sanctify. Zodhiates (1996:1572) defines this word as holy, sacred, and devoted to God. To cause to be holy, make holy, treat as holy. The fundamental idea is devotion to divine service. God alone can sanctify since only he is holy (1 Th 5:23). An object is sanctified only when God himself designates it as belonging to him. The power to sanctify is proof of deity. Again, the formal and material usage from ἅγιος *hagios* can apply. He adds that Christ’s blood sanctifies permanently, qualifying one for ministry.

Ben C. Dunson (2019:74) comments on this word: the participle form conveys the idea of ritual consecration. This act of consecrating is not a process. It is something that happens at the very inception of believing life, with salvation, e.g., “... those who are sanctified by faith” (Ac 26:18). Story (2009:77) says, “Paul never uses the verb to refer to human endeavour: the Trinitarian-fellowship is always the subject of the verb.”

Occurrences in Paul’s Letters: Rm 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Cor 7:14; Eph 5:26; 1 Th 5:23; 1 Tm 4:5; 2 Tm 2:21.

3.1.3. ἁγιασμός (*hagiasmos*)

Strong’s *G38*, prop. Purification, i.e. (the state) purify; a purifier; -holiness, sanctification. Zodhiates (1996:1572) sees this word as from *hagiazō*, to sanctify, make holy, treat as holy. Sanctification, the process [sic] or work of making something holy, sanctified behavior, holy living. The os-ending indicates an action rather than a quality or attribute as with *hagiotēs* and *hagiōsunē*. Meanings: The making of something holy; Christ accomplished this (1 Cor 1:30); the expression in 2 Th 2:13 explains what salvation consists of – the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and

faith in the truth. Holiness is necessary for salvation (1Tm.2:15) Dunson (2019:78) says that it is the nominal form to the state of existence which believers enter when they are converted, a status they maintain throughout their lives. This is the state verbally indicated using *hagiazō*.

Occurrences in Paul's Letters: Rm 6:19; Rm 6:22; 1Cor 1:30; 1 Th 4:3; 1 Th 4:4; 1 Th 4:7; 2Th 2:13; 1 Tm 2:15.

3.1.4. *ἁγιωσύνη* (*hagiōsunē*)

Strong's *G42*, sacredness (*i.e.*, prop. The quality); holiness. Zodhiates (1996:1573) gives the meaning holy, sanctity, holiness, the characteristic of being holy. It signifies the tendency or quality of being holy, the manifestation or display of holy character. Used of the Holy Spirit. "Perfecting holiness" means leading to holiness, bringing it to realization, not improving it.

According to Dunson (2019:78) this word appears only three times in the New Testament and two refer to believers; as the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16), and as maintaining one's holy status in 2 Cor 7:1. This dimension of holiness is described in 1 Th 3:13 where Paul's prayer is for the hearts of believers to be established blameless in holiness on the day of Christ's return. The increase is in love. Story (2009:77) sees this word as holiness given as a quality or state, formed as a qualitative abstract. Occurrences in Paul's Letters: 2 Cor 6:16; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Th 3:13.

3.1.5. *Other words are seldom used:*

Ὁσιος (*hōsiōs*) Strong's *G3741*, formal consecration, purity, hallowed, holy. Zodhiates (1996:2099) gives the meaning simply as an adjective, holy. Tt 1:8.

Ὁσιότης (*hosiatēs*) Strong's *G3742*, piety, holiness. Zodhiates (1996:2099) gives the meaning simply as the noun, holiness. Ephesians 4:24.

Ἱεροπρεπής (*hierōprepēs*) Strong's *G2412*, represents 'as becometh holiness', reverent. Zodhiates (1996:2082) interprets the word as reverent, pertaining to proper reverence, worthy of reverence. Tt 2:3.

3.2. *Definitive Sanctification, a Soteriological Act of God*

Our salvation is an act of God. The Father has called us; we have been justified through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit has sanctified us. Salvation comes to us by God's grace through faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, that, “It is because of him (God, who chose the foolish, weak, and lowly things) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” Some versions translate “holiness” here as “sanctification.” Morris states that the initiative in salvation is with God: “God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit ...” (2 Th 2:13) (1993:859). Our sanctification is in Christ through the Spirit. Paul, in his address to the saints in Corinth, says, “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours” (1 Cor 1:2). Believers have been sanctified so that they might be holy. Put differently, believers are sanctified at salvation to be holy in their daily living. We are called to holiness at salvation. Holiness in life is the expression of our sanctification.

Kyle Strobel (2019:262) demonstrates this point well by saying, “If a theology of sanctification functions properly for spiritual formation, it will always recall people to the truth of who they are in Christ by the Spirit, and how that reality shapes what it means to ‘walk in the Spirit’.” One sees the mystical reality of salvation and sanctification by the believer being in Christ and walking in the Spirit. Our mystical union with Christ and the Holy Spirit is a big indicative reality from which the imperative is applied. More often in Paul’s writings, sanctification is given. It advances along theological lines, after it has been located in salvation, and then applied practically. Ladd agrees that the idea of sanctification is soteriological before it is a moral concept. He says that sanctification is not a synonym for moral growth. He continues to say that Christian sanctification denotes a soteriological truth that Christians belong to God. (1993:519).

Stanley E. Porter (1993:397) aptly provides what is the crux of Pauline thinking on this matter, when he says that holiness or sanctification includes soteriological status, and more importantly, ethical and eschatological perfection. Sanctification as a soteriological reality is called *definitive* sanctification. He reminds us of the context that addresses believers after his soteriological categories. Paul focuses on the ethical consequences of salvation. In these, we see Paul insists upon holy and pure behaviour and conduct in the lives of believers in anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ, even though he never envisioned the attainment of complete perfection in this life. God’s provision of sanctification goes with his commitment

and engagement in bringing sanctification to consummation at the time of the *Parousia* (Story 2009:69). Sanctification is a divine provision which embraces the past, present, and future experience of believers in Christ. As salvation is eschatological, sanctification is eschatological too. The outcome of salvation and sanctification is assured because “God himself will sanctify you through and through and will keep you blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th 5:23). The very next verse gives us double assurance, “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it” (verse 24). The doctrine of sanctification must be considered with serious reflection on God in himself. Humans do not make themselves holy, because holiness and wholeness reside in the holiness of God who lives in trinitarian communion and wholeness (Koopman 2008:167).

The Old Testament concept of consecration is the root concept of Paul's understanding of sanctification and holiness. Payne (2020:50-56) sees two main features of divine consecration: first, God *decisively consecrates* the people of Israel by setting them apart to himself and for his purposes, which is a dynamic and relational reality. Second, in *responsive consecration*, the people of Israel set themselves apart to God in preparation for his presence through cultic acts. Payne believes that God's decisive consecration of Israel preceded and defined their responsive practice of consecration. He also believes that the New Testament's understanding of sanctification should be aligned with this Old Testament understanding. We believe that Paul's understanding follows this Old Testament pattern, and that most of his references are to accomplished sanctification, functioning as the controlling framework for imperatival terms (*cf.* Porter 2020:288).

Now, as for the weight of definitive sanctification in Paul's writings, we know that Paul frequently addressed the Christian community as “the holy” or “saints” (e.g., Rm 1:7; 16:2; 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; 6:18; Php 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2; 1 Th 3:13; 2 Th 1:10; 1 Tm 5:10; Phlm 5; etc.) as *already* sanctified. The sheer number of references here emphasises the fact that we were sanctified at the point of salvation. They were called to be saints. Dunson (2019:76) agrees, “A saint is someone who has been sanctified. One does not become a saint through a long travail in personal faithfulness.” In this sense the moral fiber of the believer's personal and communal life is almost non-existent (Story 2009:78). Payne agrees with us that by far the quantity of evidence for sanctification resides in the accomplished category (2020:57). Biblical sanctification does not happen progressively or by degrees.

In Paul's understanding holiness and sanctification were always a work of the trinitarian God, a work of the divine community. To sanctify always linked with a member of the Godhead as the primary agent (Porter 1993:398). In relation to the first person of the Trinity, Paul's prayer reflects in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May God himself ... sanctify you through and through ...". In relation to the second person of the Trinity, we interestingly see what Porter calls a *semantic overlap* between justification and sanctification. An example is found in 1 Cor 1:30, "... in Christ Jesus ... our righteousness, sanctification and redemption". Even though Dunson refers to the letter to the Hebrews (10:10), it must be mentioned that the cross of Christ is applied to the believer's sanctification in a definitive way; a once-for-all action (2019:75). He also asserts (page 77) that Paul, in most instances, also places sanctification at the beginning of the Christian life because of union with Christ (e.g., 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26; 1 Cor 7:14).

There is nothing in us or done by us at any stage of our earthly development because of which we are acceptable to God. We must always be accepted for Christ's sake, or we cannot ever be accepted at all (Bridges 2012:57). Our need of Christ does not cease with our believing nor does the nature of our relation to him or to God through him ever alter no matter what our attainments in Christian behaviour may be. The believer depends on Christ's grace, always pleading his blood and righteousness. Every spiritual blessing comes to us through Christ. Torrance (1966:101) argues that sanctification is the continued unfolding, development, and maintenance of justification. In relation to the third person of the Trinity, an example is found in Rm 15:16, "... proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit". Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us. That imputed righteousness and sanctification are in the package of redemption (Bridges 2012:63). Living out our sanctification does not make sanctification progressive. The few so-called progressive sense that the hagios word groups include, according to Porter (2020:292), can be demonstrated to be imperatival rather than progressive (see below, under 3.3.2).

Sanctification is primarily another way of describing what it means to be saved or brought to God in Christ. It is a status entered into at the time of conversion, and a status that must be preserved or demonstrated (Dunson 2019:80). Dunson's (2019:82) logic states: "... if sanctification

is a definitive event, and our participating in the death and resurrection of Christ is a definitive event, and both of these events occur simultaneously at conversion, then it makes sense to say that believers are definitively sanctified at conversion.” Sanctification is the position of believers before God, created by God, and it forms the basis of their initial call (Story 2009:78). Johnson (2013:116) correctly observes, “Whereas justification is often equated with salvation itself, sanctification is sometimes pushed to the periphery of our understanding of soteriology ... it is easy to neglect or overlook the fact that God is also making us holy in Christ, that the gospel of our salvation is incomplete without God’s glorious work of sanctification.” Johnson clearly argues for *definitive* sanctification as the dominant biblical motif (2013:115-133).

It is important that Christians understand what has been accomplished in sanctification. Payne reminds us that comprehending the nature of what has occurred in sanctification will directly and significantly impact the nature of one’s inclination toward those realities and the nature of one’s dependence on God for what those realities involve (2020:303). He is correct in saying that the accomplished nature of sanctification has been underdeveloped (p.304). Payne asks a valid question, “... why is there this felt need to maintain the notion of progression in sanctification when Scripture more directly and clearly conveys the concept of growth in Christ with the language of transformation, and inextricably connects transformation to accomplished sanctification?” (2020:306). Sanctification has qualified us for the life-changing presence of God through the finished and sanctifying work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Scripture presents sanctification as a reality to be lived out, not something that increases as would be the connotation of progressive sanctification. Increasing sanctity is not the biblical understanding of sanctification.

Holiness is the declarative work of the trinitarian God. To be sure, ethical behaviour that is grounded in the call of God must follow. So, sanctification includes having the status of divine ownership, the status of privilege, the status of position, and the status of authenticity. The tension in one being sanctified and the call to be sanctified is answered by the Pauline indicative/imperative. Ladd (1993:520) is convinced that sanctification is a factual past event (indicative); therefore, it is to be experienced here and now (imperative). It is appropriate for us to now consider the Pauline tension between the indicative and the imperative.

3.3. Indicative and Imperative

There has been widespread scholarly agreement that Paul's ethic can be summed up under the rubric indicative and imperative. Believers live in this temporal tension between the "already" and the "not yet," and between the indicative (what they are) and the imperative (what they should do or become). Life for the "new humanity" is living out, by the Spirit's empowerment, what believers are because of Christ (Dockery 1993:629). First, we will consider a definition of Paul's ethic under the description of indicative and imperative. Second, we will demonstrate the imperatival Pauline sanctification texts, which are often taken as 'progressive', and make a case for the definitive nature of the doctrine of sanctification.

3.3.1. A Description of Indicative and Imperative

Thomas Schreiner (2001:253) recognizes the difficult, yet profound area of Paul's thought: the tension between the indicative and the imperative. The indicative refers to what God has done for those who are in Christ, while the imperative calls on them to live in a way that directly complements what God has done for them. Ladd speaks of the indicatives as the motivations for Christian living (1993:524). Dunn (1998:626-7) states it differently by saying that Paul's theological outlook was dynamic in its application; his theology had immediate practical consequences. Stanley Porter (1993:401) gives Bultmann's understanding as that the imperative (ethical command) proceeds out of the indicative (statement of theological truth), with the idea that Christians should "become what they are." He correctly states that "the indicative-imperative construct is a theological paradigm"

Ladd's observation is fundamental to understanding Paul on this matter of ethics; that the Christian lives between the two ages, as a citizen of the new age while he still lives in the context of the old age. For Ladd, the indicative involves the affirmation of what God has done to inaugurate the new age; the imperative involves the exhortation to live out this new life in the setting of the old world. The main point is that the imperative is the believer's response to God's deeds (1993:524). It is God's will that the believer should put his whole being at God's disposal. This is particularly true of sanctification. God has sanctified us, so our whole being must be put at the disposal of the one who made us his property. This has eschatological implications. Schreiner correctly states, "If eschatological tension did not characterize Christian existence, no imperative would be needed ... the eschatological tension between the indicative and the

imperative must be maintained” (2001:254). The imperative is always the outflow from the indicative. “Be what you already are” is the saying that is around. The indicative is the necessary presupposition and starting point for the imperative. I like Dunn’s quote of Schnackenburg: “Work out what God has worked in you” (Dunn 1998:631).

Dunn (1998:629-30) makes an important observation concerning sanctification:

Thus, the indicative has two key moments. The first is the Christ-event, that is, Christ’s life, but particularly the death and resurrection. The second, the beginning of salvation ... Both moments are nicely caught in Rm 6.4 ... Correspondingly, the imperative can now be seen as one of two matching emphases, the two sets of present continuous tenses which match the once-for-all aorists of the beginning. The first emphasizes the sustaining grace (righteousness) of God, classically expressed in terms of sanctification, not to mention charism and sacrament. The second emphasizes the correlated human responsibility, the imperative ... The beginning of salvation is the beginning of the new way of living. The “new creation” is what makes possible a walk “in newness of life.” Without the indicative the imperative would be an impossible ideal, a source of despair rather than of resolution and hope. The imperative must be the outworking of the indicative.

Finally, the indicative guarantees the actualization of the imperative. Our obedience to the imperative is our responsibility, but never without God’s enabling power. Bridges perfectly expresses our own thinking when he says, “Thus, through every moment of his life, the believer is absolutely dependent on the grace of Christ, and when life is over, he still has nothing to plead but Christ’s blood and righteousness” (2012:57). Bridges continues by stating that, to operate on the highest level of gratitude commensurate with the grace of God, is this level of gratitude that will motivate us to obey Christ as Lord and serve him as Master (p.66). The Pauline letters are filled with imperatives to pursue holiness, to put on Christlike character, and to present our bodies as living sacrifices. He commands them to strive to put into practice what is true of them in Christ.

3.3.2. A Demonstration of the Imperative Sanctification Texts in Paul

Most of the sanctification texts have a definitive meaning; they are soteriological. However, some texts are not easily apparent as

soteriological. These can be understood imperatively.

Romans 6:17-22. Paul opens with a sense of gratitude. He thanks God for setting believers free from the dominion of sin by making them slaves of righteousness (indicative). The indicative is God's act. A human responsibility (imperative) is to offer their bodies to righteousness displaying holiness. Practical holiness is an expression of righteousness and must necessarily be the outcome if one is set free from sin's rule. We belong to God and thus are God's slaves (indicative). God's slaves are such with the imperative of us reaping holiness. Eternal life is the eschatological gift of God. Putting it differently, our sanctification is the indicative, with practical holiness as the imperative and the eschatological outcome of eternal life.

Romans 12:1. Ladd (1993:524) says that the mercies of God (indicative) mean all that has been accomplished in the revelation of the righteousness of God (Rm.1:17, indicative). Based on what God has done, Paul summons Christians to the ultimate act of worship by offering themselves as holy to God (imperative). Schreiner (2001:253-4) and Dunn (1998:626) offer the same explanation of this text. We shall again look at this text under the transformation discussion below.

2 Corinthians 7:1. The pericope (2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1) gives the context of this verse. The promises are "I will dwell in their midst, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters." Again, the idea of them belonging to God (indicative) cannot be avoided. Also, where God dwells, the temple is a holy place (indicative). The fear (reverence) of God compels them to cleanse themselves (imperative). Perfecting holiness is not cultic but ethical, practical, and speculative piety (Barrett 1990:203).

Ephesians 4:24. We observe in the context of this verse the threefold tension between the formerly-now, put off-put on; and old self-new self. The purpose is that [we are a new creation] having been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (indicative). The life of God is created in the new self. Thus, we are to shed or put off the former, and the old self (imperative) to conform to our new creation.

1 Thessalonians 3:13. Here, in the prayer of the Apostle, he desires the believers to increase and overflow in love for each other (imperative), for the purpose of God (blameless and holy - indicative) to be accomplished

at the coming of our Lord Jesus (eschatological) (cf. Col.1:21-22).

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. The will of God and the call of God are uppermost in Paul's mind. The will of God is that believers be sanctified. Being sanctified is an act of God in the Christian's life. Sanctification is the indicative; thus, to avoid sexual immorality and passionate lust (imperative). We should avoid wronging or taking advantage of a brother (imperative). Similarly, we are called by God with a holy calling (indicative), therefore we should not live an impure life, but a holy life (imperative). Otherwise, one who rejects the instruction of God (imperative) rejects the gift of the Holy Spirit (indicative).

Therefore, we conclude that our sanctification requires our responsibility to live according to its tenets. Living according to our sanctification is expressed as positive and negative imperatives. We must avoid or embrace according to the nature of sanctification. We must understand the importance of belonging to God, and whatever is his, is holy. Let us briefly explore the matter of divine ownership.

3.4. Sanctification, Believers the Property of God

The threefold Pauline imagery of the Church, namely, the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, in relation to Trinity must be kept foremost in our minds at this point. We do not mean to segregate Trinity in these Church imagery, because the Father, Son, and Spirit are involved in all the images. An instance is the Church as the Temple (Holy of Holies) of God in which he dwells by his Spirit (Eph 2:22). Thus, in all instances Paul's main concern is with Christ's body; the individual is secondary, at best. Adewuya's insight (2004:108) is valuable, "Each may be sanctified separately, but they are sanctified for community". It must be understood that we are holy even before we do holy deeds (Pereira 2013:247). We are holy simply because we belong to a holy God.

3.4.1. As the People of God

Israel was holy because it belonged to God by virtue of a covenant relationship. This was a real foundational idea which has shaped Paul's thinking about the church as the People of God. The church was in a covenant relation with God through Christ (Adewuya 2004:95). The church as the people of God, is to live out what God has prescribed for it according to his cosmic plan in Christ (Eph 1:10). Pereira (2013:243) states that the question of the identity of the church is more about who it

is, than about what it does. They need to know who they are in relation to God and themselves and the world. They are to act in a way which characterizes their identity. As God's people, they must live like God's people. The church is identified as a people whom God has set aside for himself. Sands (2010:31) perceptively states, "Human beings participate in the divine image only as they become disciples of Christ ... to the extent that their lives conform to Christ. The *imago Dei* is an *eschatological* reality ... a *dynamic* and *communal* reality rooted in redemption." This is a dynamic reality for us because Christ, who is the image of the invisible God (Col.1:15), is the last Adam and head of a new humanity through his resurrection from the dead (1Co.15:45).

3.4.2. As the Body of Christ

In relation to Christ, Paul predominantly speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ. Schreiner (2001:335) correctly admits that as the body of Christ, Christ, not the church, has priority. Two qualities of the Body become apparent, namely, that of unity and diversity. We are all one in Christ, and as a diversity of members, we are members of one another (Rm.12:5). We were all baptized with one Spirit into one body (1Cor 12:13). Galatians 3:27 says that we have all been baptized into Christ. Christ is the head of the body, and the body is his. The one body is identified with Christ (1Cor 12:12). Our identity is obtained by faith in Christ. The Body of Christ is a living organism, able to build itself and bring glory to God through Christ, our Lord. Human flourishing can best be practised within this twofold function of the Body of Christ of edifying its members, and glorifying its sustainer. Pereira (2013:246) says that the church exists as the launching pad for the cosmic agenda of God, bringing all things under the headship of Christ (Eph 1:10). Our identity prescribes our responsibility. This responsibility has *kingdom* overtones.

3.4.3. As the Temple of the Holy Spirit

"... your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1Cor 6:19). We are the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16), a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:22). Here, more than anywhere, we are reminded of us housing the holy presence of God, individually and corporately. Most importantly, this is the church in its corporate reality, in which the Holy Spirit plays the leading role (Fee 2009:113). Fee also says that the church as God's temple is pregnant imagery ... because Paul refers to the actual sanctuary (Gk. *ναός*), the place of a deity's dwelling (2009:114). Paul calls the Corinthians' attention to the fact that the living

God has only one temple in Corinth, and they are it!

God's temple is holy because God is holy. God's people have always been distinguished by the fact that God is present with them. God's holy presence characterizes the temple. We are invited to become what we are by God's grace. The divine presence is for all who are in Christ. They are the eschatological holy dwelling of God. We must become God's holy temple where he has placed us. Our fellowship with the present God must be the framework of the fellowship of the saints, for we participate in the divine presence. The community is the locale for experiencing the holiness and sanctifying benefits of God's person. Where God is personally present, there it is holy. Payne (2020:300) reminds us that God's presence can be seen implicitly and explicitly across the biblical canon as the reality that changes or transforms people. The one Spirit of God is simultaneously indwelling the various members and uniting them for communal indwelling.

3.4.4. As God's Possession and Workmanship

While we are *God's possession* by individual soteriology, it is more about our communal existence in the church of Jesus Christ. So, instead of a 'person', we should speak about the 'people' of God. The church is God's property; all believers, Jews and Gentiles are included (Pereira 2013:246). This whole new eschatological community has become the possession of God in Christ. Acosta (2010:67) reminds us that we are a multi-ethnic possession of God, not by anthropological but theological construct. It is a divine endowment. The whole new eschatological community, consisting of all nations and cultural backgrounds, is God's possession, so ordained by a God-ordained history or salvation-history, until *the redemption of those who are God's possession* (Eph 1:14). Andrew Lincoln speaks of this final deliverance by God as meaning his taking full and complete possession of those who have already become his (1990:41).

One of my favourite descriptions of the church is our divine relationship as God's workmanship (Eph 2:10). We are divinely endowed with this gift of redemption according to God's good pleasure in Christ. The salvation of believers is God's workmanship. The sanctification of them is God's workmanship. Schreiner is correct in saying that our good works are ordained for us; they are the fruit of God's creative work (2001:247). Snodgrass puts it, "In God's planning, choosing, and acting, the aim was not only to save, but also to mark out the way we should live" (1996:107).

Dunn profoundly states that Christ Jesus is the sphere of God's creative work with an age to come as his aim (1998:412). Levison (1993:189) reminds us that this creation is the new creation or new humanity as a communal reality. He continues to say that every believer who participates in the new humanity must put away conduct that characterizes the "old humanity"...and put on the new humanity, "which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator"... Ethical behaviour is to correspond to what God has enabled them to be in Christ. This ethical appeal has been called the "indicative and imperative", that is, "become in your character and conduct what God's action in Christ has made you to be" (Mott 1993:269).

3.4.5. In Christ and In the Spirit Ethics

The expression "in Christ" conveys the Apostle Paul's belief that God benefits the believer according to the saving purposes decisively effected through Christ. Every benefit of Christ is accorded to those who are in Christ. Seifrid (1993:433) remarks that this concentration of the expression in the Pauline letters has suggested to many interpreters that some or all its occurrences represent a Pauline formula, generally exhibited in the three ideas of locality, instrumentality, and modality. Being "in Christ" leads to being "in the Spirit," not the reverse. In Christ we participate with him in his death and resurrection (Rm.6:1ff; Gal.3:26f.), thus the ethical injunctions to die to sin on the one hand, and to live in newness of life on the other. Dockery (1993:629) believes that everything associated with distorted humanity is to be put to death because it has been transformed according to the perfect model, Christ himself.

The newness in life is chiefly connected to living in the Spirit. We have been placed in Christ and in the Holy Spirit at salvation. Seifrid says that it simultaneously communicates the gift of salvation and the accompanying divine demand to act in Christ and the Spirit (1993:436). Snodgrass' comment (1996:107) is profound, "In God's planning, choosing, and acting, the aim was not only to save, but also to mark out the way we should live." Equally profound is Schreiner (2001:247) saying that good works are not commanded but ordained, and that it is the fruit of God's creative work in us, who have been created in Christ. Jesus Christ is the sphere of God's creative work (Dunn 1998:412). Onesti and Brauch (1993:834) remind us that Calvin associated sanctification with justification and described sanctification as being in Christ. This shows that Calvin thought of sanctification in soteriological terms. We shall now consider the topic of transformation.

4. Transformation Towards Human Flourishing

We have defined sanctification as definitive, accomplished, or soteriological. In short, sanctification should not be seen as progressive. It is a once-for-all act of God in the life of the believer. Every believer has a holy status or position because they are in Christ. We are stating this emphatically because of the confusion that sanctification can be used for a doctrine of moral transformation. A valid understanding is that transformation rests on the established and accomplished fact of sanctification. Dunson articulates the essence of this debate: it is not over whether God in fact transforms believers throughout their lives, but rather whether this process should be called sanctification (2019:71). For many systematic theological practitioners 'sanctification' typically refers to progressive sanctification, that is, the process of increasing holiness. We would rather refer to it as the obedient living out of our sanctification, that is, the practice of sanctification imperatives. Sanctification is consecration for the purpose of transformation (Dunson 2019:87).

As for transformation, it is a predestined goal, namely that we are to be "conformed into the image of God's Son, and so that he is acknowledged as the firstborn among many brothers" (Rm.8:29). So, Christlikeness is the goal, both for every believer and for God's cosmic purpose, that all things be placed under one head, even Christ (Eph.1:10). This is the essence of recognizing Christ as 'firstborn'. In Christ, God is creating something new. In Schreiner's words, "A new world has arrived" (2001:82). Believers in Christ have received new life with a new nature. They are born of the Spirit, not under the old order of the law, but according to what matters, namely, a new creation in Christ (Gal.6:15). They are a new people of God consisting of Jews and Gentiles. They are a new humanity (2Cor 5:17) created in Christ, the 'last Adam' (1Cor 15:45) and head of this new humanity. The "last Adam" will serve as the template for a new humanity (Cantu 2019:253). So, they who are in Christ have received the image of Christ at new birth. We must grow into Christlike maturity until finally we will be completely in his likeness (1Jn 3:2). So, sanctification is what has been accomplished at salvation, and what is yet to be completed in the Christian life, namely transformation into the eschatological perfect Christlikeness. Transformation is ongoing growth into the likeness of Christ. Cantu (2019:258) agrees with our view, that the end goal of the Christian life is to be transformed and resurrected in the pattern of Christ into his new creation and kingdom.

The word transformation (Gk. *μεταμορφόω*, *metamorphoō*) occurs only four times in the New Testament. Twice it refers to the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, and the other two occurrences are found in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. The transfiguration story in Matthew and Mark is about the revelation of Christ's glory and Christ's unique approval by the Father. Both the glory and the unique approval of Christ have significance for the believer. The glory of Christ is revealed for the believer's sake, particularly if we are to be changed into his glory because we are saved to become like Christ. The unique approval of Christ underscores the cosmic purpose mentioned in Ephesians 1:10 as an eschatological kingdom reality. The transfiguration of our Lord must become the paradigm of glory and approval in our transformation. The Pauline use of *metamorphoō* demonstrates this idea further.

About the increasing glory of the believer: in 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul reveals something of the process of transformation into Christ's glory. *And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.* In this text, Paul has just shown that the glory of the law of Moses is being abolished (Barrett 1990:121). The fading glory of the law contrasts with the increasing glory of the New Covenant in Christ. When Moses saw the glory of God (Ex.34), he received a visible, yet fading glory. When we behold Christ's glory, we receive a 'visibly' increasing glory. The glory of the Lord Jesus is visible to the believer only with a disciplined gaze (Gk. *κατοπτρίζω*) at his glory. Such a gaze is also to receive knowledge of the Lord that remains distinct from him. The glory of Jesus is the means by which the glory of the invisible God becomes visible (Barrett 1986:125). Transformation takes place through the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit is the agent of transformation into Christ's glory. Transformation into Christ's glory is progressive because it is from "one degree of glory to another"; simply from glory to glory. It is an increasing glory. This glory will have reached perfection at the *Parousia* (1 Jn 3:2). Upon this understanding, I see glorification, and not sanctification, as *progressive*. However, sanctification is the basis for transformation, and transformation is the basis for glorification.

An important fact that Paul highlights in Romans 12:2 is God's approval. But let us look at Romans 12:1-2 – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed*

to this world, but be transformed by renewing your minds, so that you may discern God's will – what is good and acceptable and perfect. Paul places our transformation in contrast to conformity to the world. We are not to be conformed to this age, but to be transformed by renewing the mind (Dunn 1998:647). At the same time conformity to the world is also contrasted with presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. The cultic overtones cannot be missed. The renewing of the mind is to discern God's will and to have the desire to do what is good, acceptable, and perfect. At this point I am reminded of Philippians 2:12-13, "... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for *it is God who works in you to **will** and to **do*** according to his good purpose" (the emphasis is mine). We agree with Stan Chu Ilo (2012:200) saying, "attempts to show that God's will is made available signifies the presence of God's kingdom." This ability to discern "what is really important" is a gift or enabling of the Spirit (Dunn 1998:648). Transformation of the mind into knowing and doing the will of God will result in life-transformation which is according to God's good purpose. The Spirit also renews our mind through the Scriptures which are God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, equipping the believer for every good work (2 Tm 3:16). Living according to the Spirit is contrasted with living in the flesh (sinful nature), and it is the moral driving force for daily living (Adewuya 2001:83).

Therefore, transformation into the image of *Christ*, is to receive his glory; and transformation by renewing the mind is to find God's approval in the way that the Father approved Christ at transfiguration. This idea corresponds with the understanding of Paul's in Christ motif. The mystical concepts of *Christ* and *in the Spirit* have relevance to this two-fold transformational application in the life of the believer. It demonstrates the efficacy of the mystical union in our relationship to God and our openness to be transformed (Strobel 2019:264). *In Christ* we are provided with the glory of our new being, and *in the Spirit* opens us to the process "from glory to glory." The "renewed mind" is the Spirit's means to enable us to know and do what God approves. *In Christ* provides the motive, and *in the Spirit* provides the means. Thus, *in Christ* is the indicative (of who we are), and *in the Spirit* is the enabling power to do according to what we are. The Holy Spirit helps us be obedient and true to our calling and goal. For Paul, the Christian life is not to be lived by one's own efforts and strength, but by the Holy Spirit's provision, person, presence, and power (Adewuya 2001:74).

5. Conclusion: Human Flourishing within Evangelical Communities

Finally, let us summarize the aspects of sanctification as they relate to transformation through the imperative application. In this way, we propose a moral transformational framework aimed at human flourishing within evangelical communities. The imperative relevance to moral transformation must be something other than a works righteousness endeavour. Our responsibility is still to be honoured by a dependency on God's grace. Transformation prompted by who we are will not be burdensome because it comes 'naturally' and in dependence upon God. You are supposed to do what is according to your nature. The nature of sanctification is holiness. Holy living is the expression of sanctification. If we belong to God through sanctification, then we will do what pleases God.

If the indicative-imperative is the tension between the new and old life, then the imperative is living the new life in this sinful environment. Our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, makes our new life the resurrection life. It means that we have died to the old life and have been raised to live in the newness of life. Living in the newness of life is living by the norms of sanctification. To walk in the newness of life is to walk in the Spirit because it is the Holy Spirit who makes the resurrection possible, and it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies believers. So, sanctification is life in the Spirit. Thus, living a sanctified life is both ethical and eschatological. Salvation, which is eschatological, has ethical consequences. Holy and pure behavior is lived in anticipation of the Parousia.

To be sanctified means putting our whole being at the disposal of God because we are God's possession. We should present our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. Negatively, that means we should avoid immorality, passionate lusts, impurity, exploiting others for personal benefit, etc. Positively, we should embrace love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, goodness, self-control, fairness, etc. We should put away the old man and embrace the new man. We are to act as our identity in Christ characterizes. We must live like God's people, becoming God's holy presence. The presence of God is the true framework of fellowship among the saints. We must keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We must allow the presence of God to transform us. We are to do the God-ordained deeds we were created for in Christ. These principles proceed from a sanctified life and are the moral transformation framework for human flourishing. Let us discuss what impact it would have for human flourishing.

We must strive for wholeness in our communities. Koopman (2008:171) puts it poetically when he says, “The community of believers must be transformed into people who participate in God’s work of healing the broken, uniting the divided, accepting the rejected, announcing forgiveness and liberation for those who are judged and stigmatized, condemned and victimized.” Our community wholeness must reflect what the trinitarian community demonstrates within the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. People chosen and called by God, must be reflected ethically, both individually and collectively as proof of their calling and chosenness (Adewuya 2004:105). We must remember that a sense of group identity supersedes a sense of individualism for wholeness. Each might be sanctified as an individual, but they are also sanctified for the community of God’s people, Christ’s body, and the Holy Spirit’s temple. Believers are reminded repeatedly that sanctification must be for the whole community.

That we must be a community is the basis upon which we are to be accountable to each other and because we are members of one another in the Body of Christ. Accountability is very edifying in matters of spiritual disciplines. There are three levels of spiritual disciplines according to Richard Foster (1989), namely *inward* disciplines; *outward* disciplines; and *corporate* disciplines. The *inward* disciplines include, meditation, prayer, and fasting. We should constantly encourage one another and make ourselves accountable in these private disciplines. The *outward* disciplines, at least, are visible - namely study of the Word, simplicity (preventing materialism), solitude, submission, and service. The *corporate* disciplines include confession, worship, fellowship, and celebration. As evangelicals we might be cautious about the level of solitude and confession. Nevertheless, openness to be accountable to the brethren can only encourage moral transformation and human flourishing.

God, whose holiness we reflect in our community is himself a trinitarian community. Thus, any unjust or unholy society will not mirror trinitarian wholeness. This is particularly relevant for our African context. As Nweke (2020:312) reminds us, the visible relevance of transformation is its moral strength. So, morals must occupy central place, particularly in African society. Adewuya (2004:97) believes that Africans tenaciously believe that moral values are based upon recognising the divine will and that sin in the community must be expelled if perfect peace is to be enjoyed. Koopman (2008:174) echoes this sentiment: “On the continent of Africa with its prominent worldviews of wholeness and unity, instead of dualism

and segregation, the idea of holiness as wholeness enjoys spontaneous acceptance.”

Webster (2006:60) articulates what could serve as a good summary: “Only God is properly holy; only God may elect the church; only an elect church is sanctified; the church’s holiness is thus grounded in the election of God the Father.” Those reconciled to God are sanctified by Christ’s Spirit so that we may cultivate a new life in conformity with Christ, whose image we bear. Koopman (2008:178) says that holiness in action embodies holiness as embrace, holiness as justice, and holiness as living from the work of the triune God of calling, justification, and sanctification. It must be our conscious attempt to “grow seeds of life for the reconstruction of a human sphere where Christians fully perform their duties as generators of active and creative hope” (Ka Mana 2004:121).

Finally, the Bible must be the chief source because of its dynamic to connect individuals and communities to the very agenda of God. The Scriptures are indispensable in the pursuit of true individual and community holiness. Hiding God’s Word in our hearts is necessary for preventing sin (Ps 119:11). As also articulated by our Lord in his prayer to the Father, “Sanctify them by your truth; your Word is truth” (Jn 17:17). Communities must show the characteristics of the kingdom of God. They must demonstrate the transformative grace of God as a means to remove evil. We who have embraced the faith in Christ must radiate the light of divine love for transformation. We must believe in the power of the Gospel to save and change lives. We must be a community who believes that the God who has begun a good work in us, will continue it to completion in according to his full pleasure. Every community who seeks to flourish as a community must be humbly open to mutual accountability under the authority of Scripture. Such is the sanctifying mission of God.

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him in the writing of this article.

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SECTION B