

Introduction: Welcome to Engage 360 Denver Seminary's Podcast. Join us as we explore the redemptive power of the Gospel and the life changing truth of scripture at work in our culture today.

Dr. Don Payne: Hello again, you have reached Engage 360 from Denver Seminary. We're glad you're with us. I'm Don Payne, your host, and this week we are privileged to have back on the podcast, our esteemed Provost and Dean Dr. Lynn Cohick. Welcome Lynn.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Nice to be back Don.

Dr. Don Payne: Lynn I think is in a very good mood, which is partially why I'm glad she's here because as we record this the Pittsburgh Steelers or Stiller's as the case may be, are coming off a win. And I have learned that Lynn's overall psychological wellbeing is pretty much linked to the fortunes of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Is that an overstatement?

Dr. Lynn Cohick: And is that a problem where, you know?

Dr. Don Payne: I'm just being descriptive, not evaluative.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Exactly, you're happy because the roles are going to be reversed here pretty soon. And I'm looking forward to it.

Dr. Don Payne: Yes, on that. Yeah. On, on that note, Lynn is here actually to host this week's episode, I'll be back, but Lynn the mic so to speak is, or the chair is yours. I mean only metaphorically because my chair is my chair. Okay. But metaphorically. Yeah, the chair and the mic is yours.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: I'm very excited Don, to be able to talk with you about your new book *Already Sanctified, A Theology of Christian Life In Light of God's Completed Work*. It's an excellent book. I actually read it.

Dr. Don Payne: Well, thank you.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: You're welcome. So yeah, and enjoyed it. And, and the Steelers won and I mean, you know, my cup runneth over, but to get this as, as I read through the book, I thought is there, this is such a great topic, but was there a specific situation event, a student question that kind of drove you to explore this topic of sanctification?

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. There were a number of things that converged for me actually over a span of probably a dozen years, at least some were conversations with New Testament colleagues of mine who had raised questions, or at least suggested alternative perspectives to the traditional formulation of the doctrine of sanctification as it's commonly presented by systematic theologians like myself. And as we often teach that in theology classes, what really prompted a deeper

dive into that for me some years ago, was a series, a several year long series of experiences with students in our summative or capstone experience. We call Mdiv orals for the Master of Divinity program. And for those who maybe listening who went through this experience, I hope I don't give you any ticks or, you know, anything, PTSD. That's what I'm saying. Yeah. Right. For those who don't know what that is, it's like a miniature ordination examination where students have to write a doctrinal paper that summarizes their beliefs and defends their beliefs on a variety of traditional theological doctrines.

Then they have to defend the paper in front of a couple of profs. So I admit I've been administering these exams with colleagues for many, many years. And I began to notice some years back a very consistent pattern. And the pattern was that when students got to the section of their paper on the doctrine of sanctification and stated their own beliefs, they would do two things, almost without exception. One is that when they talked about what they believed about sanctification, they would say almost nothing, many times nothing at all, sometimes very little, about sanctification as an accomplished work of God. What theologians often call positional sanctification. I don't care for that language, but that's what it's typically called. And then the second thing they would do actually three things. The second is that they would go on and on about this notion of progressive sanctification as if that is sanctification. The third thing they would do is that they would build their doctrine of progressive sanctification on New Testament texts that say nothing at all about sanctification.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: And that's a bit of a problem.

Dr. Don Payne: Well, I thought so, you know, I mean, I'm only a theologian, but even I could pick up on it, something's not right here. So I began to think, now this is odd, why? And that prompted me to do a deeper dive into the biblical texts, Old Testament and New Testament, and begin to look at exactly how the sanctification or in the Old Testament consecration that the Kadosh and Hogios word groups are actually used. What's the pattern of their use. And I found what I think is a very different story than what my own kind, systematic theologians, typically tell.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: All right, well, let's dive into that. You used some terms like accomplished sanctification and the idea of progressive sanctification. And you talk about in your book also how that ladder progressive sanctification is equated sometimes with growth towards spiritual maturity. Could you just talk a little bit more about those what you mean when you say accomplished sanctification and then progressive sanctification?

Dr. Don Payne: Right. I'll start with the latter because progressive sanctification, which is the category that gets almost all the attention and has for quite some time, progressive sanctification is taken to be everything that happens in the Christian life Post-Conversion, however you want to define conversion. It has to, it's sort of an umbrella concept for everything that relates to growing up into Christian maturity, being more virtuous, being more spiritual, being more like Christ. And

the accomplished aspect of that is typically called, as I mentioned, a moment ago is typically called positional sanctification. Some people will call it definitive sanctification. I've chosen not to use positional simply because it tends to have a sort of static or formal set of connotations. What I'm trying to get at there is, the aspect or the character of sanctification that God has already decisively done for us. It's a done thing.

And this is probably the more controversial notion, that, that has while that has implications for our character and our transformation. It is not per se, a character concept. Now there's a fine nuance there, but it's an important one that sanctification, as such, is not a character ethical concept. Though, it has lots of implications for that. And that's sort of a reversal of proportion from how the doctrine of sanctification has been treated in many evangelical traditions where it's taken to be primarily everything that's out ahead of us out in front of us, rather than that, which is behind us and defines us. And I think the biblical story is just the opposite.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: So you there's a sentence that you use in the book towards the end where you say "transformation is a fruit of sanctification". Is that sort of what you're trying to get at that distinction of?

Dr. Don Payne: In many ways, it is. Yeah, it's a transformation is still a very real thing. There's a robust doctrine of transformation in the scriptures, particularly in the New Testament, which is focused very much on Jesus Christ transformed into the image of Christ. So to say that sanctification has already been accomplished is not to say that we're already mature. We've sort of, you know, leapfrogged as it were into a level of spiritual maturity onto a plane of maturity in an instant. It's not to say that. It's to say that to be sanctified, God has done something in our lives that then provides for and propels and obligates our transformation.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yeah. I really enjoyed how the beginning of your book, you focused on consecration and as a key element in this study of sanctification, and I had just not made that connection before, but I found that really, really helpful. Can you unpack a little bit how consecration is such an important image as we think about sanctification.

Dr. Don Payne: Right. The New Testament, when it, in English translations the word sanctification or sanctifies use that that picks up the storyline of what in the Old Testament is captured by the Hebrew word group Kadosh, which is often in English, translated consecrate or consecration. And because that linkage is very tight and very clear, then our understanding of whatever the New Testament says about sanctification has to be rooted in and defended on the basis of how consecration is used, what that means in the Old Testament. And I think it's less controversial that in the old Testament to consecrate someone or to consecrate some thing was to set it apart for Holy purposes, set it apart for God's purposes, but somehow, and I'm not sure exactly how somehow that seems to have gotten lost or diffused between the testaments and sanctification took on a different set of connotations. And in the New Testament then became

almost conflated with, or assumed to be synonymous with transformation, which if you look carefully at those texts, it's really not, it's connected, but it's not the same thing.

So, consecration in the Old Testament for again, a person or a thing, an inanimate object to be consecrated was to be in many cases ceremonially cleansed. So that, that person or thing could be in the immediate presence of God and to be used for God's purposes. And that is a very consistent and very easily defensible notion all throughout the Old Testament that consecration or holiness. I mean, the consecration *Kadosh's* is also translated Holy to make something Holy, to make someone Holy. When someone or something is made Holy or consecrated, they are being fitted for the presence and the purposes of God, their character is not necessarily changed. Now, it is obliged to change as a result of that. But that as such is not a change factor. It is not signal that the properties of a person or the character of a person has somehow been altered because they've been made Holy.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Exactly. Yeah. You use a phrase; God takes ownership by the spirit. And I just, that captured my imagination to think of God taking ownership through the spirit that over and over in the book, you stress that relational piece of sanctification. Talk a little bit about God taking ownership by the spirit.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah, we see that very vividly in the New Testament, particularly in some of the Pauline Corpus, where for example, in first Corinthians 3, Paul speaks to the church in plural language that they are now the dwelling place or the temple of the Holy Spirit. And he uses that in three, I think it's 3:16, 3:17. He says that that to them as a basis for appealing to them to treat each other differently or to be more unified, because up to 3:16, 17, he was chastising them basically for dividing over their preferred leaders in the church. And he gets after them for that and then says, I'll paraphrase somewhat here. He says, don't you know who you are? You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the spirit of the living God has set up shop among you. And I'll use that phrase, taken ownership of you and you can't treat each other like this. You are unified because of the spirit of the living God who dwells among you. And then actually in chapter 6 and 7, he even uses that concept somewhat more directly and speaks about the spirit of the living God claiming them or having claimed them or owned them in some way. And so for the spirit of God, to be the one who brings us into the presence of God, if you're listening to my descriptions here, that hearkens back to what we see in this consecration, Holiness language in the old Testament for the spirit of the living, God, to set up shop among us, to lay claim to our lives individually and corporately means that we have now been brought into the presence of the living God. And that is a real game changer.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: That's the accomplished part. That is what God has done.

Dr. Don Payne: That has done, that has happened. Through Christ and by the spirit. Yeah.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yes. And you, you reference John chapter 17 verses 17 and 19 as that place, one of the places in scripture that really supports your case, do you want to unpack John 17 a little bit for us?

Dr. Don Payne: Sure. This is, and I'll open that. So I don't get the wording wrong, but this is where Jesus refers to his own sanctification for the sake of the disciples. And interestingly, this text seems to be somewhat glossed over in discussions of sanctification. I'm not sure why maybe people don't know what to do with it because it doesn't exactly fit the conventional profile. But John 17:17 Jesus is praying to the father and he says, sanctify them sanctify, excuse me. That is the disciples. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And here's the key part for them. I sanctify myself so that they too may be truly sanctified. Now it's really difficult to square that with the notion of sanctification as progressive growth. Okay. Because Jesus sanctified himself, so that they would be sanctified. Okay. Something else is going on there. The first thing we have to notice is that this is a, there's a connection here to what Jesus says in John 14:6, where he says, I am the way the truth, the life. So then he loops back to that here and he says, sanctify them, or set them apart, or cleanse them by the truth. He's apparently speaking about himself.

Okay. But what's intriguing here is that Jesus did not need to grow up into the image of Christ. I think he was probably already there or already that I'm guessing, but I think it's pretty good guess. But what he seems to be saying here is maybe a couple of things. First he sets himself apart. He consecrates himself for the father's purposes, so that the disciples two could be consecrated, sanctified, set apart for the father's purposes. But there's also this sense and this doesn't get quite as much attention, but there's this sense in which all the Christ's does, including his life and death is vicarious, it's on our behalf. So when he offers himself as a sacrifice for sin what is Paul saying Second Corinthians 4? He who knew no sin became sin for us. There's a sense in which the cleansing from sin, which he himself personally did not need. He undertook that on our behalf in a sanctifying act so that we are cleansed from sin, but he is speaking about something very definitive, very decisive that the father did through the son on behalf of the disciples.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yes. Yes. And we think about them as a group of disciples. I wonder what you think about the corporate nature of transformation. And you've mentioned with the Corinthian text, and now with the John text, what I'm going to switch here a bit to transformation, right? Because at least in my mind, I think of sanctification at a very individualistic level. And sometimes I do also with transformation, but is there a corporate, where does the corporate body of Christ come into this conversation?

Dr. Don Payne: Well, certainly it does have a starting point or an anchor point in John 17. And if we go back again to the Pauline Corpus, we see Paul, Peter actually does this as well in some of his letters, but Paul does it a lot. We see him appealing to this notion of accomplished sanctification in a plural sense as the basis for ethical

imperatives. And this is where some of the linkage comes in between sanctification and transformation. And the phrasing I use in the book a few times is that, we can be transformed and we must be transformed because we have been sanctified, but that is corporate as well as individual because often these texts function with plural language. Paul addresses them in a number of the introductions to his letters. And again, Peter does this as well. He addresses them as the Holy ones, as the sanctified ones, in Corinth, in Ephesus. And it's easy to take that as kind of a throwaway intro line. Like, Hey, how you doing? Hope you having a good day. Now here, this is what we're going to talk about. But there's a theological statement being made there. He's addressing them in the plural as Holy ones, as sanctified ones. And in like First Corinthians 6:11, he gets very pointed. And this is where he's again, chastising them for their behavior. He says, you have been justified. You have been sanctified. And therefore here's my paraphrase, you know, step up your game, okay. Live like who you have been made to be. And that is very corporate because in the Corinthian correspondence, particularly, he's speaking about church problems, he speaking about disunity over one thing and another, he's got a whole checklist that letters pretty much a checklist of divisions, and internal relational problems that he corrects by appealing to the fact that they have been sanctified. They are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yes. Yeah. And I think of at the beginning of First Corinthians, you know, he addresses them as Saints and then he talks about all of the things that they have. And in those, I don't know, seven through nine, something like that. And I think at times when I've read this in some commentators also reflect on, is he even being sarcastic? Because you look then at all of the ways they've stumbled and taken the wrong path through the rest of the letter. And you think, can you really though say that about these Corinthians, but I think your point is that with accomplished sanctification, it is not us that has done this work. It is God who has made us Holy. So these are the things that God has done from there now, you know, step up your game.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. Ephesians 4 is another example. Now Ephesians 4 is not a sanctification text, but that is where Paul does say to the Ephesians, we grow up together in him, who is our head.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: That's right. That's right. Yeah. Yeah. So the Romans 12 verse, while we're still here in the New Testament, some people might be thinking, well, does Romans 12:1 through 2 support what you're saying? Or is it kind of going in a different direction? So maybe you could explain your interpretation of that passage and go ahead and read it. You know, I have most Old Testament memorized, but you as a theologian are probably.

Dr. Don Payne: I'll have to look up in. Yeah. Tell me what page that's on. Okay. Yeah. Is that in the New Testament or Romans?

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yeah. Just take your time.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. Romans 12. Therefore I urge you in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices Holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may be able to test and approve what God's will is his good pleasing and perfect will. Okay. Now, interestingly, this is one of the most commonly cited texts to support the notion of progressive sanctification. And this is one of the texts that often challenged students on a year after year. How was it that this is talking about progressive sanctification? And they say, well, right, the it's right there, you know, be transformed. Well, that's not even the same word now. So while this does not support this traditional notion of progressive sanctification, it does in fact, I think pretty well support what I'm talking about because where the word *hagios*, Holy appears is in verse one. And it's an it's it functions as an adjective, a descriptor of who we are to be, or as the ones who present ourselves for transformation, we present ourselves to God as Holy sacrifices. And then on that basis, we're told to now don't, don't be conformed to the world, but be transformed. So holiness there is not the transformation. Holiness is the precondition to the transformation process.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: What you're talking about accomplished sanctification. Yep. I appreciated how you developed the understanding of Trinity in your study. You know, you talked a lot throughout the book on about all three persons. And I find in some evangelical circles or writings you don't really find the Holy Spirit mentioned much. It's kind of a God the Father and God the Son. Why is it important to have a Trinitarian perspective as we think about sanctification?

Dr. Don Payne: Well, interestingly to me, anyway, lots of the literature, both theological and popular about sanctification talks a lot about the Holy Spirit, different theological traditions will talk about the spirit in different ways related to sanctification. Some like in more reformed traditions will speak about the spirit as more of a behind the curtain influence, superintending, guiding, prompting the process, some in more Kasich, some will know what that means, or charismatic or Wesleyan circles will speak about the Spirit's role in a more overt kind of self-conscious way as the spirit who's either self-consciously guiding a process or supercharging the process. Okay. So the spirit actually gets quite a bit of attention in sanctification literature, but what does not seem to get as much attention is the full orb trying and personhood of God. And if you read all of the texts, Old and New Testaments, you see that it's a very Trinitarian process all the way through the father is sanctifying. The son is sanctifying. The Spirit is the agent of sanctification. The Son is the framework or the orientation point of sanctification. It's really Trinitarian all the way through. When, or if, we get lopsided in a Trinitarian way and, for example, speak only, or mostly about the spirit in sanctification, then the way that can get tangled or miss proportioned is that the Spirit becomes a bit like a tool where we just, if you just kind of dial into the Spirit enough, you'll get yourself sanctified or you'll have a certain kind of experience that you might call sanctification or you'll grow up.

And the Spirit becomes overly instrumental. I mean, the Spirit is instrumental, but becomes more like a tool rather than seeing in this full orb to sense how sanctification, consecration, Holiness is about the Spirit through the Son, bringing us into the very presence of God. And this I would contend, I do contend is the thing that changes and transforms us. Because if you look at some of those Old Testament texts where either the priest or even the whole nation of Israel had to be consecrated made Holy, it was always with a view to coming into the presence of God, always, and even inanimate of objects, you know, the utensils, the alter, the things that were going to be in the Holy of Holies, everything had to be made Holy why? Because it was going to be in the presence of God. And if we start there, that's both very Trinitarian as we read the whole of scripture. And I think it's pretty clear that there is nothing that will change a person like being in the presence of God. And being attentive to that, that'll change your life. It's sort of, I say this with a smile though, to them, I'm sure it wasn't funny at all, but in Exodus 19, the whole nation of Israel had to be made Holy or consecrated the night before they were to come to the foot of the mountain to meet with the Lord so that they wouldn't die, that's bracing.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: That does give you pause.

Dr. Don Payne: Yes. It does.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: But it highlights the necessity for sanctification that I think, as you were talking about the using the Holy Spirit is kind of a tool to have a particular experience. Yeah. It becomes self centered as opposed to the absolute essentialness of God making us Holy so that we can be in his presence. And of course he wants us in his presence and that's expressed a lot in the New Testament through the phrase being in Christ or words to that effect.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. Right. Union with Christ. That's a big, that's a corollary concept. It sort of overlaps this.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yeah. as we finish up, are there, what are your hopes of readers that as they finish this, this work of yours, what, what do you hope they walk away with?

Dr. Don Payne: I really hope that people will find a sense of hopefulness and freedom to let the Lord grow us up and to mess with us, to do that transforming work with confidence, that the decisive definitive work has been accomplished. And here's some of this for me also grew out of some pastoral concerns where I've seen the notion of progressive sanctification, particularly the inordinate amount of attention that is given to that in comparison to the very minimal amount of textual support that it has, I think, and at best, very opaque support. But I've seen that notion be a real albatross around believers' shoulders because, and I use a little anecdote like this in one of the chapters, right? I say, if you, if you stand up in front of any group of Christians who are reasonably theologically conversant, they know some of the lingo and you say, okay, tonight, we're going to have a study on a Holiness, on sanctification. I guarantee you that what's going through many of their minds is a big sigh. And what they're thinking is, oh

great. Here we go again. Now I'm going to leave here feeling crummy, being more keenly aware of all the ways I don't measure up. I'm not Holy. I got to get it together because that's how the doctrine of sanctification has been used over and over again. Now some will say, well, those that's an abuse and a distortion, but it proves the rule I've had. I've got far too much anecdotal evidence to be dissuaded from that.

And if this is what makes texts, like, I think it's Hebrews 12:14, which says without Holiness, no one will see the Lord. Again, you got to keep in mind Holiness and sanctification are the same word in Greek. Okay. But without Holiness, no one will see the Lord. Well, that'll suck all the air out of the room and out of your lungs. And if our dominant profile of sanctification is what's out in front of us in our transformation, then you read a text like that. And you just think, well, I got no chance. I got no chance. And somehow that just gets glossed over that holiness sanctification has been done for us. It doesn't mean that we're all together or that we've been transformed. It means that we can be transformed. And that the spirit of the living God is the one who has, has brought us into God's presence in a way that will in fact change us. But the decisive work has been done. I want this to bring hope to people, to take the albatross off their shoulders and make it enticing to get in the game and step up their game and pursue transformation into the image of Christ. That's what I hope.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Well, I do too. And I think they would be well on their way in reading this book. It was heartening, uplifting, informative. Yeah. And I came away feeling I had a blessing. So, thank you for all the hard work that I know went into writing this. Yeah. And thanks for the conversation. I'll turn my host duties back over to you now, as you close us out here of this podcast.

Dr. Don Payne: Well, thanks, Lynn. And thanks to all of you for taking a little bit of your day to enter into our conversation. We hope it's been beneficial to you. We're grateful for all of your connections to us here at Denver Seminary, whatever those are. And we'd love to hear from you. You can email us at [podcast@denverseminary.edu](mailto:podcast@denverseminary.edu). So on behalf of our Seminary, administration, faculty, and our Provost and Dean here in the room. Thanks again. We'll look forward to speaking with you again next week. Take care.