

## Sanctification

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John 17:19

(NA 28<sup>th</sup> ed.)

(NRSV)

καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν,      And for their sakes I sanctify myself,  
ἵνα ᾧσιν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἡγιασμένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.      so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

The salient word in line 1 is *hagiazō*, as in hagiography (the biography of a saint). It means to make holy, to consecrate, to sanctify, to set apart. The verb is also in line 2, as a perfect participle. Hence the augment from *ἀ* to *ἡ*. *Alātheia* is “truth” as in alethiology (the study of the nature of truth, a subset of epistemology). The truth sanctifies Jesus’ disciples and those who follow after.

I remember sitting in class at seminary, listening to the professor say that Jesus Christ became sanctified. I was quite offended. He was born holy, wasn’t he? It is you and I who need to be made holy, not him! Yet—here was this one verse, where Jesus said that he sanctified himself. Hmmm.

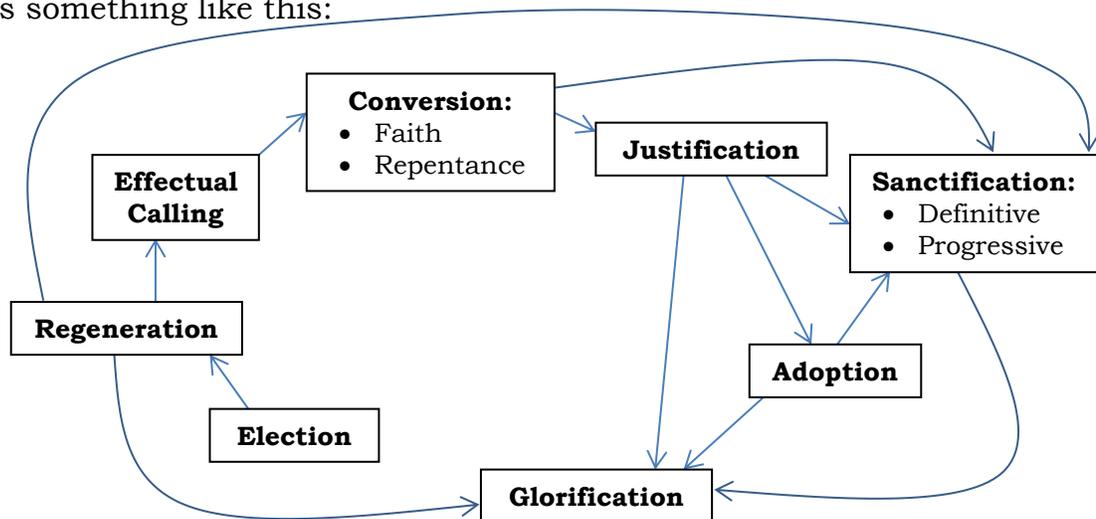
It didn’t stop there. I also learned that Jesus was justified! I thought only sinners needed to be justified. But 1 Tim 3:16 uses *dikaioō* for Jesus—“justified” (your translation probably says “vindicated”). Hmmm.

“Vindication” is a sort of justification, isn’t it? God raised Jesus, and in so doing he declared Jesus righteous. Jesus’ words and works were thereby vindicated. So I reconciled myself to the idea that the Christ was “justified.”

But it was over the top crazy to hear that the only begotten Son of God was, of all things, adopted! Yet there was Acts 13:33. When he rose from the grave, this was the public announcement that he was the “adopted” son of God

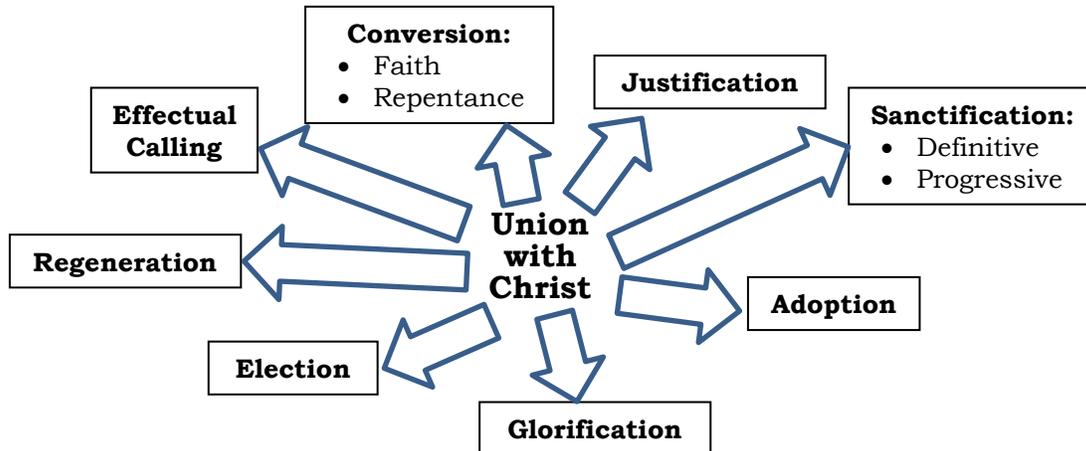
in the sense that God adopted David’s lineage (2 Sam 7:14). Though as the second Person of the Trinity he was the Son of God from all eternity, when he rose from the grave this was the public announcement that he was the Messianic Son of God—the Son of God with power to convey sonship to those united with him. (Thus we too can be children of God in him!) Jesus is adopted as the King of Israel. Through his resurrection he is set apart, declared righteous, and definitively revealed as the rightful heir of David. Hallelujah!

I (and perhaps you) used to think mostly in terms of the *Ordo Salutis*, that looks something like this:



As you know, this chart can get very detailed and complicated. Election is connected with foreknowledge (Rom 8:29) and we are elect “in Christ” (Eph 1:4). So perhaps one could argue that before creation God knew us “already glorified” in his mind. Then glorification would precede election logically, closing the circle. Just a muse on my part. (If you are so inclined, go ahead and draw an arrow from Glorification to Election. I don’t have the guts.)

Anyway, what I learned in seminary is that these elements of the *Ordo* are actually aspects or perspectives on the one, central work of the Spirit in salvation, namely our union with Christ. Particularly, our union with his birth, perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension. This is not the *Ordo Salutis* but something I find even more inspiring. It looks like this:



Jesus is the Elect One, and we are elect in him. His life imparted to us is our regeneration (John 5:21, 1 Pet 1:3). His faithfulness unto death inspires our faith and repentance (Heb 12:2 – 3). We are united with him in his resurrection-vindication; he was “raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25). We have his Spirit of Sonship. Our union with his resurrection is our glorification (1 Pet 1:3 – 5). And so on.

We are united with him. That is what each long “-ation” word is about. I don’t know about you, but I think this is incredible. I personally found it very refreshing after trying to build the perfect *Ordo*.

The New Testament makes at least as much theological capital on Christ’s resurrection as on his atoning death. Lots of benefits come to the

believer through his resurrection. I recommend that you make a commitment to preach the resurrection *every Sunday*. Many preachers are so focused on his death, as the expression of his great love for us, that they forget to preach this.

Remember: Jesus said the truth sanctifies. So this is a challenge to you. Make a list of all the benefits that come to us by his resurrection. Then preach them!