

Introduction

Theologians debate whether there is a need for a “crisis” moment in which the believer fully dedicates himself to God and submits to following Christ in all things,¹ or whether sanctification can proceed sufficiently in the believer without such a crisis moment. Some theologians who argue for the need of such a crisis moment cite Romans 12.1-2 as a supporting key verse, primarily because of the aorist tense of the infinitive *παραστήσαι* in 12.1. The endeavor of this paper is to analyze the grammar and syntax of Romans 12.1-2 to test the theory that it indicates the need for such a crisis moment, then to consider the theological arguments on both sides of the debate, before reaching a conclusion on this theological question. Such an endeavor is warranted for its relevance with regard to accurately teaching Romans and with regard to helping people in the church to experience progressive sanctification. It is of special interest to a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, because some of the school’s historically prominent writers have supported this view of sanctification and of Romans 12.1-2.

Grammar and Syntax Issues

Several theologians have argued that the aorist tense of *παραστήσαι* in Romans 12.1 implies this is a one-time, or once-for-all, event. For example, Ryrie [formerly a prominent theologian at Dallas Theological Seminary] argued that the dedication of the believer’s life is necessary for filling of the Spirit, and that there is both an initial dedication and a continued dedication. From Romans 12.1-2, he perceived the initial dedication as being a one-time crisis, involving three things: presentation, separation, and transformation. In 12.1, the verb for “present” [*παραστήσαι*], being aorist, indicated to Ryrie that this was a one time event, a dedication of the entire life of the believer in the form of submission to Christ. As Ryrie saw it, 12.2 directs the believer to not be conformed to the world and to be transformed by the renewing of his mind as part of that same one-time event. Since the imperative for “conform” [*συσχηματίζεσθε*] is present tense, Ryrie took this to mean “stop being conformed”; yet as part of this same discussion, he said the present tense of the imperative “be transformed” [*μεταμορφοῦσθε*] indicated a continuous transformation.²

Deriving his thoughts from these same verses, Walvoord [a former president of Dallas Theological Seminary] wrote that “... subsequent to the initial act of being born again and receiving salvation in Christ, there is normally a later act of the will in which individuals surrender their life to the will of God...”³ Stating it another way, Walvoord wrote [based on the aorist tense of the verbs] that the believer’s offering of himself to God in Romans 6.11-14 and Romans 12.1-2 is an initial act of recognizing Christ’s lordship and submitting to control of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Hopkins [an early leader in the Keswick Convention] wrote that to experience progressive sanctification, the believer needs to experience a second blessing in the form of a crisis act of submission, and

¹ Throughout this paper, I will use the terms “submit” and “dedicate” [and their respective derivatives] interchangeably. If one dedicates himself to God’s purposes, he is thereby submitting to God’s direction and vice-versa.

² Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 95-96.

³ John F. Walvoord, “Response to Dieter,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 57.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 217-218.

he based this view on his inference from the aorist tense of the verb παραστήσαι in Romans 12.1 that this must be a once-for-all action.⁵ Duffield and Van Cleave [Pentecostal theologians] used Romans 12.1 as the basis of stating that every believer will have a dedication moment to make Christ lord of his life.⁶ Dieter [a Methodist theologian] wrote that Romans 12.1-2 not only demands a total submission to God but also that this submission prepares the believer for progressive sanctification, rather than concluding it.⁷

An Infinitive Fulfilling the Role of an Imperative

In Romans 12.1, the verb παραστήσαι is an aorist active infinitive. According to Robertson, there are no aorist infinitives fulfilling the role of an aorist indicative in the New Testament, so this aorist infinitive is fulfilling the role of an aorist imperative,⁸ which the context of the controlling verb Παρακαλῶ also suggests. Wallace identified this infinitive as indirect discourse of the verb Παρακαλῶ, and said that in most such cases the infinitive would keep the same tense as the represented direct discourse.⁹ Thus, the infinitive παραστήσαι here represents an aorist imperative.

The Aspect of an Aorist Imperative

Burton is in agreement with Wallace's statement, and said this fact implied the aorist tense would represent indefinitely expressed action.¹⁰ Wallace wrote, for an imperative with "the aorist, the force generally is to command the action as a whole, without focusing on duration, repetition, etc. In keeping with its aspectual force, the aorist puts forth a summary command."¹¹

Specific to the claims noted earlier about the implications of the aorist tense in Romans 12.1, Wallace wrote that it is an error to consider one category of usage [*Aktionsart*] as controlling the aspect of the tense, and specifically used the example of falsely concluding "the aorist means once-for-all action." He noted that the aorist can describe an event that is one-time, but does not always do so; in fact, "The event might be iterative in nature, or durative, or momentary, but the aorist says none of this. It places the stress on the fact of the occurrence, not its nature."¹² Rob-

⁵ William W. Combs, "Romans 12.1-2 and the Doctrine of Sanctification," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 11 (2006): 7-8.

⁶ Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 245.

⁷ Melvin E. Dieter, "Response to Horton," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 137.

⁸ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 858.

⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 604.

¹⁰ Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), §110.

¹¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 485; emphasis removed.

¹² Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 557.

Robertson was in agreement, saying, “the aorist can be used also of an act which is not a point... The ‘constative’ aorist treats an act as punctiliar which is not in itself point-action.”¹³

Blass and Debrunner wrote that, while generally the aorist infinitive or imperative concerns conduct in a specific case, it can also express a change in conduct [ingressive];¹⁴ this is true even if the change will then be somewhat continuous in action.¹⁵ Robertson was in agreement, noting that the aorist may be used to signal the beginning of an action or the end of an action: thus it could represent “the unmodified point-action called ‘constative,’ the point-action with the accent on the beginning (inceptive) called ‘ingressive,’ the point-action with the accent on the conclusion called ‘effective.’”¹⁶ Wallace added that an ingressive aorist is common in New Testament usage, and with it there is no statement about whether the action continues.¹⁷ Thus it seems we cannot make the conclusion Ryrie, Walvoord, Hopkins, Dieter, and Duffield and Van Cleave made about the aorist tense of παραστῆσαι, at least not by its tense alone.

Why Paul Used an Aorist Infinitive

Noting that the imperatives which follow in Romans 12.2 are present tense, one might wonder why Paul chose an aorist infinitive in 12.1, and whether he was trying to convey any information thereby. First, the aorist was a very common choice for the New Testament writers,¹⁸ and occurs more often for infinitives than any other tense.¹⁹ Furthermore, according to Burton, the aorist infinitive commonly is in use in the New Testament after verbs signifying a command, hope, or promise [among other types] for which the following infinitive reflects a future action relative to the preceding finite verb.²⁰ Perhaps we could consider Παρακαλῶ in Rom 12.1 to fit in this category, and thus we would expect to find an aorist infinitive following, regardless of the intended continuity of the action.

As noted earlier, the aorist tense can be used to stress the beginning of an action. According to Wallace, “This use of the aorist is usually shut up to two kinds of verbs: (1) It occurs with stative verbs, in which the stress is on entrance into the state. (2) It also occurs with verbs that denote activities, especially in contexts where the action is introduced as a new item in the discourse.”²¹

¹³ Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 832.

¹⁴ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Revision of the ninth-tenth German edition., incorporating supplementary notes of A. Debrunner*, ed. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 172-174.

¹⁵ I believe this was the point Buist Fanning was making one day in the classroom.

¹⁶ Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 829.

¹⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 558.

¹⁸ Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 831.

¹⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 496, graphic.

²⁰ Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, §113.

²¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 558.

In this case, the aorist tense might imply the Romans should “move beyond cultic worship and asceticism” to a true sacrificial worship of lifestyle.²²

Context

According to Carson, the meaning of any tense depends in part on the context, and for the aorist this is more true than for other tenses, because the aorist tense itself tells you nothing about time or kind of action, merely that the action is viewed as a whole.²³ Sometimes, even the context will not make it clear what is the intended *Aktionsart*, but it is worth investigating.²⁴

Because Paul calls this presentation a “sacrifice,” many commentators have elaborated on how this sacrifice relates to the priesthood of the believer and thus to the priestly sacrifices of the Old Testament. This line of thought has led some to conclude that παραστήσαι in Romans 12.1 must indicate a one-time, good-forever, action, because, as Hiebert wrote, “a sacrifice laid on the alter could not later be retrieved...”²⁵ However, Hiebert himself pointed out that the distinction of this sacrifice is that it is “living,”²⁶ which suggests this sacrifice could take itself off the alter, were we to continue his analogy. Surely Paul meant for the believer’s sacrifice of dedicating himself [submitting to God] to be total and lasting [continuous], but παραστήσαι might represent a complete action of presentation, without being momentary.

Hiebert also connected this sacrifice with the commands in Romans 6.12-13, and Romans 6.19, regarding presenting members of the body to sin or God.²⁷ What is interesting about these two earlier passages, which Hiebert did not mention in his discussion, is that in 6.19, παραστήσατε is an aorist imperative which clearly in the context signals a change in behavior from the aorist indicative of previous presentation as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, and in 6.12-13, παραστήσατε is an aorist imperative which clearly in the context signals a change in behavior from the negative present imperative of not presenting their bodies to sin as tools of unrighteousness. So in this sense, the connection supports the view that the aorist tense could be taken as ingressive.

Though Moo noted the sacrificial context, he rejected the inference from the aorist tense that this is a once-for-all submission, and said, “there is no reason in the context to think that Paul would view this presentation as an offering that we make only once. Paul simply commands us to make this offering, saying nothing about how often it needs to be done.”²⁸ Schreiner also rejected the

²² Alan R. Culpepper, “God’s Righteousness in the Life of his People Romans 12-15,” *Review and Expositor* 73:4 (1976): 451.

²³ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 71-73.

²⁴ Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 835.

²⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (1994): 314.

²⁶ Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2,” 316.

²⁷ Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2,” 314; also making this connection was Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 748.

²⁸ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 750-751.

inference from the aorist tense that this is a once-for-all submission, and said there is no contextual factor to suggest this.²⁹

Though he did not mention tense, Cranfield said this submission must “be continually repeated” and that the full context of this sentence indicated the believer’s life is “to be marked by the continuing process of sanctification... it is to be moulded [*sic*] and shaped ever more and more into conformity with God’s righteous will.”³⁰ Similarly, Combs argued that while the aorist infinitive in Romans 12.1 did not say anything about how often the presentation might need to be made, the context of 12.2 was much more revealing. Combs argued, “In v.2 Paul explains the metaphor of sacrifice in v.1 by giving the concrete steps by which the imperative of v.1 is to be worked out in the lives of believers... The aorist tense verb ‘present’ in v.1, is now explained by the two present tense verbs ‘conformed’ and ‘transformed,’ which stress the progressive, ongoing nature of believer’s participation that is required in his dedication to God.”³¹ In other words, what is implied here is not a one-time crisis moment, but a lifetime attitude of submission, that would grow as the believer was further sanctified. One of Combs’ sources for this idea was Moo, who saw 12.2 as “probably subordinate to v.1, giving the means by which we can carry out the sweeping exhortation of v.1.” He argued, “We can present our bodies to the Lord as genuinely holy and acceptable sacrifices only if we ‘do not conform to this world’ but ‘are transformed by the renewing of the mind.’”³² Thus the context not only does not support the view of a one-time sacrifice, it argues for a continuous [or at least repeated] sacrifice.

A Syntactical Illustration

Using the same verb as an aorist infinitive, 2 Timothy 2.15 says, “Make every effort to present [παραστήσαι] yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately” [NET]. If Paul meant this to be a one time presentation, it would seem to be something Timothy must work continuously over time to achieve; but perhaps Paul did not mean for Timothy to present himself one time, for Timothy was already presenting himself as such a person, and would need to do so each day of his ministry if he were to be successful.

Grammar and Syntax Conclusion

There is no basis in grammar or syntax to infer from the aorist tense of the verb παραστήσαι in Romans 12.1 that this must be a one-time presentation. There is a basis in the syntax of the aorist tense to suggest this could be a one-time presentation, but there is also such a basis for this to signal nothing about whether this is one-time or not, and there is also such a basis for this to signal the start of new behavior that would be iterative or continuous. In fact, the context suggests this last idea to be the most likely, if one takes 12.2 as an elaboration of the means by which one achieves the command in 12.1.

²⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 643.

³⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, eds. G. I. Davies and G. N. Stanton (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 600-601.

³¹ Combs, “Romans 12.1-2 and the Doctrine of Sanctification,” 14, 19.

³² Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 754-755; Schreiner, *Romans*, 646, agreed with Moo.

Theology

The history of the concept of a one-time crisis dedication seems traceable.³³ It begins with Wesley, who believed in a one-time crisis blessing after conversion, which eliminated willful sin and stimulated love. Following Wesley, Finney said that a believer would experience a one-time crisis blessing by an act of faith, which would then lead to continued spiritual growth. Strongly influenced by these teachings, the Holiness Pentecostal movement developed a theology of three works of grace: first conversion and regeneration; second, a blessing much like that of Wesley and Finney, in that it was one-time, attained by faith, and led to purity in the believer so as to allow for Spirit filling; and third, an empowering “baptism” of the Spirit for gift equipping. The more conservative side of the Pentecostal movement, influenced less by Wesley and more by Baptist or Reformed thought, sort of combined the second and third blessings of the Holiness Pentecostal movement, believing in a post-conversion “baptism” of the Holy Spirit which would allow for filling of the Spirit and gift equipping, but which did not purify the believer to the extent believed by previous advocates of such a crisis experience.

Independent from the development of Pentecostal thought, but also influenced by the Holiness movement [e.g. Finney], the Keswick movement promoted the idea that the progressive part of sanctification in this life [post-conversion] involved both a crisis moment and a subsequent process. The crisis moment is one of total submission to Christ, which ends resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit and leads to much accelerated sanctification and greater resistance to sin. Influenced by the Keswick teachings were such emerging forces in conservative circles as Moody, McQuilkin, Thomas, Schofield, and Chafer. Through Chafer’s writings, the belief in the necessity of a one-time crisis dedication became associated with Dallas Theological Seminary, because Chafer [the seminary’s founder and first President] believed the key to spiritual victory lay in yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit, which begins with a total submission to Christ.³⁴

Objectionable Elements

Perhaps the biggest problem with Wesley’s original idea is the incoherence of his teaching about it. At the least, one can be critical of his terminology, for he used familiar terms but gave them new definitions: he chose the term “perfection” to classify the state of the believer having made the crisis dedication, and said such a person would no longer commit “sin”; but this perfection was limited to the eradication of willful sin only, and even in that respect such believers might fall away from this perfection.³⁵ The two Pentecostal movements appropriated the scriptural term “baptism of the Spirit” and gave it a new meaning. The biblical baptism of the Spirit is for all believers at the time of conversion, baptizing them into the body of Christ [1 Corinthians 12.13]; thus it is incorrect to consider this to be any kind of post-conversion event.³⁶ Furthermore, scripture teaches that all believers have at least one spiritual gift, even those so immature in faith and unsanctified that they need repeated chastisement from an apostle [1 Corinthians 1.7;

³³ For example, see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 386-405; Combs, “Romans 12:1-2 and the Doctrine of Sanctification,” 4-10.

³⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That is Spiritual: A Classic Study of the Biblical Doctrine of Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1918), 44, 88.

³⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: The Epworth Press, 1952), 16, 112.

³⁶ Walvoord, “Response to Horton,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 147.

12.7], so it would be incorrect to claim a need for a post-conversion “second blessing”³⁷ for equipping of gifts [tangential to our discussion].

The Need for Submission

Keswick theologians see sanctification as a lifelong process, but – observing that many Christians do not experience evidence of progressive sanctification at the rate which might be expected – they see a need for a crisis – which might involve a deeper realization of Christ’s provision, a greater realization of God’s requirements, or a greater level of submission – which leads to removal of a barrier of cooperation and thus results in faster growth.³⁸ Interestingly, when arguing against the need for such a crisis, the Pentecostal writer Pearlman speculated that people who experienced something real out of such an act of dedication might have been experiencing an awakening to the position they already had as a believer in Christ,³⁹ one of the types of crisis Keswick specifies. In Keswick theology, this dedication could come about at conversion or afterward in a subsequent crisis.⁴⁰

In Keswick theology, God’s deliverance from the power of sin is conditional on complete dedication to God, because the essence of sin is self-centeredness, choosing to be apart from God and his will; thus submitting to God is necessary to defeat the control of sin; but at conversion, the believer has little understanding of God, and thus little effective submission, which leaves a need for a later crisis submission.⁴¹ The Dallas Theological Seminary writers – Chafer, Ryrie, and Walvoord – took this thought farther by noting the need to submit or yield in order to be filled by the Holy Spirit.⁴²

None of the major schools of theology argue against the need for submission in the Christian life. Believers are to be led by the Holy Spirit in daily life [Romans 8.14]. It makes sense that the more a believer philosophically submits to Christ’s leadership in his life, the more he will be able to yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit on a moment by moment basis. We also see by comparing the language of Colossians 3.16 and Ephesians 5.18 that a believer’s need to submit to the Word of God and to yield to the Spirit go hand in hand.

This submission is a commitment to follow Christ, which is required of every believer [1 John 2.4-6; 1 Corinthians 11.1]. An ongoing theme throughout the Bible is that God desires all of a believer’s devotion and all of a believer’s dependence: believers are to live for Christ [Galatians

³⁷ Here again, the terminology gets confusing. Some Pentecostal groups believe in three blessings, so this “baptism” would be the “third blessing.” Other Pentecostal groups have argued against the second of those three blessings [the need for a crisis dedication, though they believe in the need for dedication], but have retained the “baptism” which then becomes the “second blessing” to which we refer here. See Stanley M. Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 111, 117, 128.

³⁸ Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1952), 85-86.

³⁹ Horton, “The Pentecostal Perspective,” 111.

⁴⁰ Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 116.

⁴¹ Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 109-112.

⁴² Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, 41; Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 95-96; Walvoord, “The Augustinian-Dispensational Perspective,” 217-220.

2.20]. Submission includes acceptance of God's sovereignty in the believer's circumstances, an acceptance of the challenges and limitations he faces, and a willingness to suffer [1 Peter 2.21; Matthew 16.24]. In submitting even to suffering, the believer follows the example of Christ [Hebrews 5.8-9], and this will aid him in becoming more like Christ, which is the purpose of sanctification [James 1.2-4]. Such a submissive attitude might be beyond the believer, yet he might pray to be made willing to submit, as Chafer said: "We make no promise that we will not sin or violate the will of God when we yield to Him. We do not promise to change our own desires. The exact human attitude has been expressed in the words: 'I am willing to be made willing to do His will.'"⁴³

Though believers are always indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are commanded to continue being filled with the Holy Spirit [Ephesians 5.18]. We see this continuous need in Peter, who was filled at Pentecost [Acts 2.4], but then needed filling again for speaking on behalf of the disciples to the rulers, elders, and scribes [Acts 4.8]. Being filled means the believer allows the Holy Spirit to control and influence him. This is evident from the verbs used for filling of the Spirit [Luke 1.67; Ephesians 5.18; Acts 11] and how they are used elsewhere to mean being controlled or influenced by one's anger [Luke 4.29], sorrow [John 16.6], and deceit [Acts 13.10]. Thus, when yielding, the believer does not get more of the Holy Spirit, rather he allows the Holy Spirit to influence him more.

Yielding to the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to experience this leading through illumination of the Word of God [1 Corinthians 2.12-15; John 16.13-14] and promptings of the Holy Spirit [e.g. as Paul did in Acts 16.6-8], to which the believer must be willing to submit. As Chafer said, "...the child of God, facing an impossible responsibility of a heavenly walk and service, is directed to the Spirit as the source of all sufficiency."⁴⁴ Being filled with the Spirit leads to experiencing the fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5.22-25], which is evidence of sanctification. If one is yielded to the Holy Spirit, and thus filled with the Holy Spirit, it can be assumed that one will be led by the Spirit. If the believer were not willing to be led, then he would by definition not be yielded, and we can trust that the Holy Spirit will make his leading available to the believer if he is yielded.

Being led by the Holy Spirit allows the believer to appropriate the blessings of his new nature, particularly through his assurance [Romans 8.16; Ephesians 1.13-14] and leads the believer to confessing his sins and healing [1 John 1.6-9], which together will lead to greater obedience [Galatians 5.16; Romans 8.3-9], another evidence of sanctification. Being led by the Holy Spirit will also bring about more intimate worship [Ephesians 5.18-20], more fervent prayer [Ephesians 6.18], deeper participation in biblical community [Romans 12.10], more reading and understanding of the Word [John 16.12-14; 1 Corinthians 2.9-3:2; 1 John 2.27], and greater interest in serving others [1 Corinthians 12.4-11], which all contribute to the sanctification process. Being led by the Holy Spirit is living in dependence on God. The Holy Spirit will comfort the believer [John 14.16] and help the believer to develop the love of Christ in his heart [John 13.34; Romans 5.5]. He will help the believer to take his thoughts captive [2 Corinthians 10.5] and focus on the things of God [Romans 8.5]. Every believer needs to have this moment by moment dependence

⁴³ Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, 92.

⁴⁴ Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, 43.

on the Holy Spirit, because his enemies are stronger than he is [Ephesians 6.12] and ready to attack [1 Peter 5.8], and the believer is tempted to identify with the world in its sinful ways [James 4.4]. The passages that call on believers to resist temptation and evil stress faith and dependence on God for deliverance [1 Peter 5.8; James 4.7]. There can be no good argument against the need for submission in the Christian life.

Must this Submission Come First in a Crisis Moment?

The question remains whether this submission comes about strictly through an initial crisis moment. As we have seen, Wesleyans, the Holiness movement, most Pentecostals, the Keswick movement, and certain Dallas Theological Seminary theologians have advocated the need for a crisis moment of submission or dedication. Reformed theologians would argue against the need for a post-conversion crisis moment.⁴⁵ But those same Reformed theologians would say there was a crisis moment of “definitive” sanctification at conversion. Hoekema pointed out that this definitive aspect of sanctification which occurs at conversion includes all the definitive aspects of Romans 6, including being crucified with Christ and thus dead to the bondage of sin, and being raised with Christ to new life for God.⁴⁶ But in part, the Reformed view is based on their understanding that a person must commit to the lordship of Christ [i.e. dedicate or submit himself to Christ] as part of accepting the gospel,⁴⁷ so there is in the salvation process itself this crisis of submission.

While the Reformed theologians are correct in their observation that real changes occur in the process of regeneration and conversion that make a more sanctified life possible, there are strong arguments against the lordship salvation position if we believe salvation is by accepting the identity of the savior and the work he accomplished on the cross for us.⁴⁸ However, we need not prove that point here, for even Reformed theologians acknowledge the problem of immature and sinful believers as evidenced in 1 Corinthians.⁴⁹ Though he argued against the need for a post-conversion crisis in *all* believers, Hoekema acknowledged that *many* believers will experience crisis moments in which their faith deepens or their submission and dedication increases; as he said, “we certainly must leave room for experiences of this sort in the lives of Christian believers.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 83; Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 403-405.

⁴⁶ Hoekema, “The Reformed Perspective,” 72-73.

⁴⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 22, 69; Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 260.

⁴⁸ I have argued against the lordship salvation position elsewhere. Throughout the biblical narrative, salvation is based on dependence on God through believing in his promises concerning deliverance, not on obedience to commands. As I concluded elsewhere, “If acceptance of the promise was the way to salvation, while obedience to the commands was not, then we should not require submission as part of the gospel today. Obedience is a result of faith, and so submission should be taught to the new believer immediately, but the gospel, the ‘good news,’ is that we can be saved by faith in Christ and what he did on the cross.”

⁴⁹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 24-26; Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 415-416.

⁵⁰ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 26-27.

Keswick theologians believe you must have a crisis moment to begin fully experiencing the process of sanctification, but some allow that the build up to the crisis might be a long process in itself;⁵¹ in other words, what the believer might experience is the process of progressive sanctification to bring him to the point of submission, then the crisis moment that deepens that submission, followed by an accelerated process of progressive sanctification. Keswick theologians call for a denial of self, putting Christ first above self and above worldly desires and ambitions, and a willingness to sacrifice for Christ;⁵² all these seem amenable to a gradual progressive process leading to the definitive moment of realizing a new level of submission. Certainly the recovery of an addict is marked by such a crisis moment of expressing the sincere desire to recover, after which the addict can benefit from treatment and hope to walk drug-free, but just as certainly the Holy Spirit would have been at work in that person to bring him to that crisis decision. As mentioned earlier, such a crisis could be the realization of the position in Christ the believer has had since conversion, so here we might consider that such a realization could have been the focus of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work to that point. The person in bondage to habitual sin such as lust might experience a breakthrough in realizing the revelation of his victory in Christ, but no doubt the Holy Spirit was at work in him leading him to the point of willingness and understanding needed for that revelation to lead to experiential victory.

Perhaps the reality is not that the rate of sanctifying work increases after the crisis, but that the effects are more noticeable once the big task of bringing the believer to submission or dedication is done. An analogy might be found in downloading files from the internet or backing up files onto another drive: the rate of data processing might be constant, but the percentage of completion shown on the screen will stagnate as a large file is processed: the work goes on, but without noticeable result, until the big file is complete, and then the results show one big jump followed by steady improvement, even though the rate of processing stayed constant. So, prior to the crisis moment, the Holy Spirit might be at work and the believer might be experiencing sanctification, but that work is focused on bringing about the change of heart or renewal of the mind on a key issue and thus the visibility of effects on life change are low, but once the believer has been brought to that crisis by the Holy Spirit, without changing his pace of working in the believer the Holy Spirit now brings about the life change consequent from the crisis decision and the effects are more noticeable.

Given that the need for submission to Christ and yielding to the Holy Spirit is continuous, and given that even a relatively mature believer can have pockets of deception in his theology or of hidden sin in his heart, a believer might experience more than one such crisis as the Holy Spirit brings him through various obstacles to being Christ-like. Or it is possible that the Holy Spirit will bring a believer steadily into greater submission and dedication without a noticeable crisis moment. What we can be sure of is that everyone who is not fully submitted will experience God's work to bring about this submission, and that work might even include severe afflictions, as God attempts to bring the believer fully into his intimacy [Hebrews 12.6]. Also, it seems obvious that regardless of whether the process includes a single post-conversion crisis moment, several of them, or only the crisis of conversion, the process of progressive sanctification is a cy-

⁵¹ Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 114-115.

⁵² Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 119-120.

cle: submission will lead to a greater level of sanctification, which in turn will lead to a greater willingness to submit, and so on [see the attached chart].

Theology Conclusion

The Holy Spirit proceeds uniquely in each believer to bring him to Christ-likeness. There is no basis theologically to conclude that all believers must experience one or more crisis moments in which they submit more fully to Christ, for the process might be bringing them to submission steadily; but there also is no basis theologically to conclude that no believers will experience such a crisis moment, for such a crisis might be part of the process the Holy Spirit has for them.

Conclusion

There were two related questions for this paper: theologically, is there a basis for concluding that believers must come to a single crisis moment of dedication or submission as part of the progressive sanctification process; and grammatically/syntactically, is there a basis for using the aorist tense of the infinitive παραστήσαι in Romans 12.1-2 to support this view.

We have found that it would be incorrect to assume that the aorist infinitive in Romans 12.1 signals that this is a one time presentation [dedication]. The aorist tense could represent a one-time dedication, but the nature of the tense alone does not give enough information to make that determination. Paul might have used the aorist here to signal a change in behavior, because of the addition of a new thought to the discourse, because the infinitive followed a verb of command/hope, or for some other reason. Outside of its context, a determination on whether the infinitive represents a one-time act is impossible. The context could suggest a one-time dedication based on the imagery of sacrifice [though that argument is not entirely persuasive], but also could suggest a continuous effort at dedication, if v.2 is taken as an elaboration of how to accomplish the command in v.1.

Theologically, we have found that the major positions can be reconciled if theologians are willing to be less dogmatic. Keswick theologians [advocates of the one-time dedication who have not tangled the doctrine up with other objectionable elements] observe that most believers come to at least one such crisis moment which changes their lives, but they are open to the idea that such a crisis of dedication could take place at the time of conversion or not be necessary at all as the Holy Spirit might work more smoothly in some believers. Reformed theologians [representing the opposition] believe such post-conversion crisis moments are unnecessary, in part because they believe dedication should take place at conversion, but they acknowledge the problem of sin and immaturity in the body of Christ and are open to some believers having such a crisis moment in which they realize more fully what was accomplished for them on the cross. We must remember that sanctification is about a change in the character of the believer, not life change: it is likely the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in each believer, but in some the evidence of this work is not visible until the Holy Spirit has brought the believer to a crisis moment of submission or of realizing the reality of scriptural revelation, after which the evidence of the Spirit's work becomes more evident through visible life change.

From Romans 12.1-2, we see a need for dedication to God, for resistance to the pull of the culture, and for experiencing a sanctifying transformation through the renewing of our minds. The need for this dedication, resistance, and transformational renewal is constant and continuous.

Also, the more we are able to submit or dedicate ourselves, the more we will be able to resist and be transformed, but such obedience and sanctificational transformation will in turn empower us to submit or dedicate ourselves further, leading to an upward cycle of sanctification that reverses the downward spiral of sin. Therefore, we can exegete Romans 12.1-2 properly and help people experience progressive sanctification by not making absolute judgments on whether a crisis moment of dedication is necessary for none or all, and by understanding that the work of the Holy Spirit is unique in each believer, and there is not in this passage any reason to argue over whether a crisis moment is necessary.

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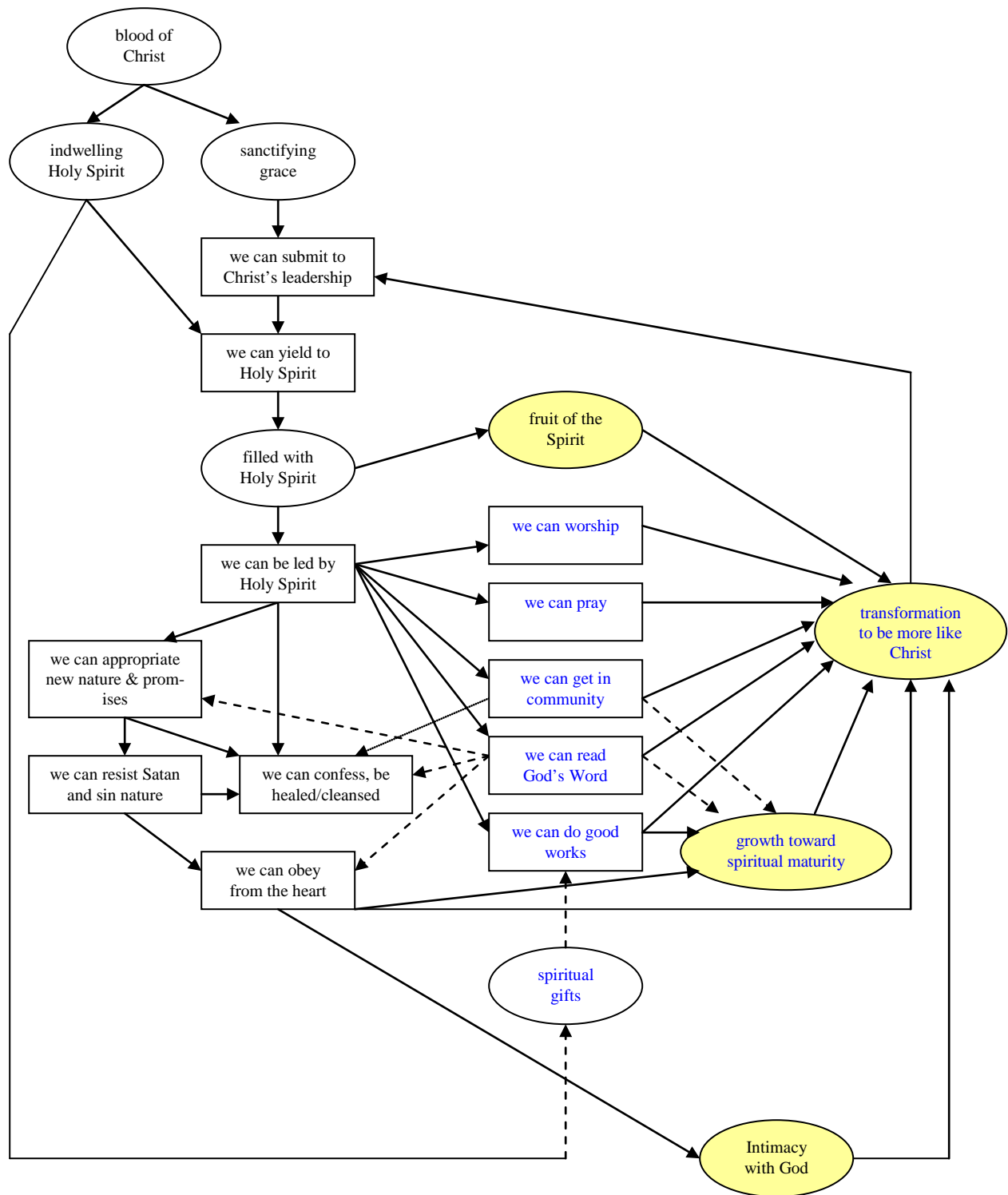
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Will Groben created this chart and submitted it with scriptural support in a paper for ST105.