



Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness

David G. Peterson

Download now

Read Online ➔

Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness

David G. Peterson

Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness David G. Peterson

In this New Studies in Biblical Theology volume, David Peterson challenges the common assumption that the New Testament views sanctification as primarily a process. He argues that its emphasis falls upon sanctification as a definitive event, "God's way of taking possession of us in Christ, setting us apart to belong to him and to fulfill his purpose for us." Simply to identify sanctification with growth and holiness, he contends, obscures the emphasis and balance of New Testament teaching and creates unrealistic expectations. Throughout this study Peterson builds his case on the careful exegesis of relevant passages, with a keen eye for the pastoral implications of his findings. Addressing key issues in biblical theology, the works comprising New Studies in Biblical Theology are creative attempts to help Christians better understand their Bibles. The NSBT series is edited by D. A. Carson, aiming to simultaneously instruct and to edify, to interact with current scholarship and to point the way ahead.

Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness Details

Date : Published May 29th 2001 by IVP Academic (first published 1995)

ISBN : 9780830826018

Author : David G. Peterson

Format : Paperback 191 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Christian

 [Download Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctific ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctif ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness David G. Peterson

From Reader Review Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness for online ebook

Paul Wichert says

As the series indicates, this is a very exegetical book. It surveys the Scriptures' use of holiness and sanctification language and serves to reorient the focus onto the believer's identity and status in Christ (definitive or positional sanctification) from the transformative (progressive) aspects of sanctification. Peterson places this latter aspect in it's proper context of expressing or fulfilling the responsibilities of our new status in Christ. "Sanctification is about being possessed by God and expressing that distinctive and exclusive relationship by the way we live." (p.48). The book proceeds exegetically (Greek and Hebrew are transliterated) through some very important passages, especially Rom 6-8, from which Peterson draws his conclusions and summaries from these texts. Each of the six chapters has a helpful "Conclusions" section which draw together the main points of the chapter. I would suggest reading this book with your Bible open as much of the discussion refers to the relevant texts and contexts. Peterson's point is that the emphasis of the NT is not on sanctification as primarily "a process of moral renewal and change," but rather "describing what it means to be converted or brought to God in Christ and kept in that relationship." Some of his points were quite nuanced, but this is a good book for reflection on our identity in Christ and great for better understanding this important biblical subject. The writing was very clear and organized, but some of the discussion topics were slightly advanced. This is a great series of books so far.

Nathan Schneider says

This was a challenging read because of the dense content. However, it was also fruitful. Peterson's conclusion is basically that sanctification is less a process and more an instantaneous reality upon one's faith in Christ. Therefore, we don't work to become holy, but because we're holy, we orient ourselves to the things of God. Great read for my spiritual growth. He did make certain presumptions that seemed unnecessary for the flow of the book.

Jeremy says

I agree with the broad premise of the book denying that "progressive sanctification" is really a category in Scripture, but much of his prose seems to mix language and remains a little confusing.

Nevertheless, at some points he is very clear, especially where he delineates between "renewal"/new life/growth language and sanctification/holiness/set-apartness language.

He also does seem to be a little too tied to theological categories, from my layman's perspective, which probably doesn't mean much.

Ronnie Nichols says

This is the second of the NSBT series that I have read. Both are outstanding. Possessed By God gives the

reader a definitive understanding of Sanctification (the process of being conformed to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit). Clear teaching. Great Biblical exegesis. I highly recommend this work, and will continue to purchase and read the other volumes in this series.

Josh says

A helpful review of the way the New Testament uses the language of sanctification. But there were times I felt the author overstated his case.

Zachary says

Excellent book on Sanctification by David Peterson. I really enjoyed his *Engaging with God*, and this did not disappoint either. The primary argument of the book is that the modern conception of sanctification as an ongoing process is Biblically inaccurate. Through a rather in depth exegesis Peterson dives into the major passages associated with sanctification and develops a biblical understanding of sanctification, debunking the progressive conception of it. At the same time, he develops a more robust understanding of renewal, transformation and growth.

An excellent book, it definitely is aimed more at the scholar than the lay person. Though, in the end, I think most any believer could read it and benefit from it - his language is straight-forward and due to the nature of the work, most all of his 'fancy' words are well defined and developed in the text. Just understand, if you're not as accustomed to reading more academic-oriented writing, it might be a little 'deeper' read than you're used to and it may take a little bit to adjust to it.

I would highly recommend this to pastors, specifically because of how important correctly and Biblically understanding sanctification is for pastors. Excellent book!

Mark says

This book was paradigm shifting for me. Even though I had often observed that the Bible uses "sanctified" in the past tense I did not know that this is the way it is used the majority of the time in the Bible. Our sanctification is so much more than just our maturation in Christ--there is a huge part of it that has already been accomplished for us at the cross--it is what makes us holy and able to be called "saints." This reality of our new identity in Christ then provides the motivation for holy living, which is also a crucial part of sanctification. This book is a clear call for us to start learning and speaking about sanctification in the way that the Bible actually uses the word--if any of this interests you, this book is a must read!

Trevor Binkley says

Simple and straightforward exegesis of key passages show that we have misunderstood and misused the language of sanctification. The NT speaks of us being definitively sanctified by Christ, He has set us apart.

The language of renewal, transformation, and growth is what the NT uses not sanctification as an ongoing

process. Though this may seem like a semantics issue, the confusion of terms has often led to an understanding of growth that we need to work towards rather than the emphasis being on the completeness of Christ's work. Our role is to come back time and time again and remember His sanctifying work on the cross, and we look forward to the final resurrection when we will be perfected with Him in glory when He renews all things.

Nolan Fox says

Very good at dismantling the modern view of sanctification as moral progress, and going into the epistles to show that sanctification is just as accomplished as justification. It was well worth the read.

Laurent Dv says

Good books that debunks the common interpretation of the terms for sanctification in the New Testament. Most interpreters always consider sanctification as progressive sanctification but actually the main meaning of sanctification is a definitive one, it means basically the one-for-all consecration and dedication (i. e. conversion) at the beginning of the christian life, the action by the Spirit's by through union with Christ by which we become member of God's people and can meet the Holy One.

David Martin says

I didn't outright disagree with anything in regards to the central argument of this book. I merely found it to be a tedious exercise in splitting hairs.

The thesis is an argument that sanctification is binary, rather than gradated. It's an "on/off", "in/out" situation. He places sanctification alongside justification as something that happens at the inner rebirth. Stated simply, according to Peterson, gradual renewal $\neq$ sanctification, but is rather an outworking of it. Just as works express and reflect faith, so renewal expresses and reflects the sanctification that has happened.

All of this I take no issue with. He just took 150 pages to say it.

I don't like writing negatively about books in which the author seems to have great intentions and be a devout believer (and therefore I write long reviews with plenty of qualifications). I get the sense that Peterson loves Christ and is seeking to serve, and to that end, I stand by my brother. I do need to list the items I didn't love, and they fall under three categories:

1. Trying to prove Calvin
2. Imbalanced weights
3. Muddled eschatology

Starting with Calvin

There seems to be a trend with books in a certain vein (and several in this series) of starting with Calvin rather than from baseline. Somewhere halfway through the book I find the author to accidentally let a sub-

conscious sub-thesis slip, and it turns out to be trying to write a contemporary defense for some position of Calvin's.

Imbalance

Peterson knows better than I the excesses and misunderstandings he is trying to refute with his argument, but I fear he has left too much room for error on the other side. In assuring us with many and many different phrasings that we are once-and-for-all sanctified, to no effort of our own, and with nothing we can do to increase or decrease our standing, he puts to rest definitively human effort. I fear, however, he also accidentally buries the seed for a different problem: not trying. He attempts to state that there is still a need to display the outworking of sanctification with pure actions in life, but I fear that at points the arguments were just muddy.

Eschatology

There was a strong mix of inaugurationalism and not-yetism with a strong hint of supercessionism. I agreed with some of the concluding statements, but his preceding eschatological statements left me either unsure of where he stands, or sure that I disagree. Men are entitled to disagree on eschatology, though, I suppose.

Conclusion: fine book, but not one I'd be quick to recommend. Again, Peterson seems like a really nice guy.

Austin Fry says

Really really good exegetical analysis of something we often misunderstand -- sanctification.

Vaughn says

Excellent. Thoroughly researched and persuasive in its position that renewal and transformation are more accurate terms than progressive sanctification.

Highly recommended.

Glen O'Brien says

This book is an excellent treatment of the New Testament material on sanctification and I used it as one of the texts for a biblical theology unit I taught at Booth College on sanctification. However, I do feel quite ambivalent about its use in that context. While it deals admirably with all of the key texts on sanctification, providing good exegetical studies along the way, it is marred by an apparent need to criticise (and often unfairly) those in the Wesleyan theological tradition. The author will often portray Wesleyans as holding to sinless perfectionism overlooking the nuances of perfectionist teaching within the tradition. Ironically his own findings in discussing certain passages are sometimes fully in line with Wesleyan views. The book is also a critique of the author's own Reformed tradition, at least its Puritan heritage which has placed great stress on holiness as a mark of the elect. The characteristic Puritan stress on "progressive sanctification" (mortification and vivification) the author sees as unhelpful because it places, he says, an unhelpful burden on believers and obscures the completed work of Christ in their lives. Since the New Testament is primarily concerned with the positional holiness of believers we should place the stress on the instantaneousness of sanctification not its progressive features. Christ's death secures believers as the holy ones of God, set apart

as belonging to him. That is a completed action that cannot be taken away from or added to. That is all good so far as it goes but Peterson does not do justice to the frequently found imperatives within the New Testament to "perfect [it's a verb here] holiness in the fear of God," to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received," etc. Believers are "saints" yes, but saints "called to be holy." Holiness in the New Testament must be understood as holding the positional and the experiential together. This was something Calvin certainly understood and it is a pity that this particular Reformed theologian seems to have departed from that emphasis here. I wish there were a book that did as good a job as this at interpreting the New Testament material on sanctification without the need to engage in an unnecessary and often unfounded polemic against Wesleyan theology.

Chad says

Simple yet thorough exposition of the doctrine of sanctification in which Peterson seeks to correct common misconceptions about the doctrine.
