



Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology (Studies in Biblical Literature)

By James M. Howard

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What role does the Christian community play in the process of growing in Christian maturity? This book argues that in Pauline theology the redeemed community is a necessary means for the progressive sanctification of the individual believer, an idea that is largely misunderstood in parts of the Western church. It evaluates foundational theological considerations traditionally omitted from sanctification studies and places them within the context of Pauline theology. Included are the missiological nature of holiness, the initiatory character of God, the creation of the new humanity as reflecting the image of God, and the impact upon the church resulting from the radical redefinition by Christ of the cultural symbols surrounding the Jewish temple system. This book offers a corrective to the individualized approach to Christian growth: For Paul, the focus of God's transformative activity culminates with the community rather than the individual, the goal of which is to reveal God's glory to the broader creation.

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Editorial Review

Review

«James M. Howard is to be commended for contributing what is surely the most lucid and carefully argued case for the role of human Christian community in its ongoing transformation into the image of God – in its progressive sanctification. His conclusion that the dynamics and patterns of Christian community originate in God's initiative to bring human beings into relationship with himself underpins the potent dialectic which finds Christians who are struggling to achieve and sustain community integrally involved in a divine project of growth. And in this project, temple becomes more than a metaphor and solidarity is more than a virtue or a survival technique. The implications of this interpretation for understanding church identity, Christian growth, and mission in the still heavily individualistic Western world are tremendous.» (Philip H. Towner, Director of Translation Services, United Bible Societies, Reading, United Kingdom; Honorary Lecturer in New Testament, University of St Andrews, Scotland)

«Systematic theology rightly stresses the role of sanctification in Scripture and especially in Paul but usually conceives of it individualistically. Biblical scholarship abounds in social-scientific study that stresses the corporate solidarity of ancient cultures and of God's people but focuses little on sanctification. James M. Howard presents exemplary exegetical and biblical theology to show how sanctification in the Bible and particularly the Pauline corpus requires active participation in the community of believers, as both a key locus and essential means for growing in holiness. A must read for any who are in the least bit tempted to try to make 'lone-ranger' Christianity viable.» (Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary)

About the Author

The Author: James M. Howard, a former missionary with Cadence International in Germany, is Director of the Southern Colorado Center and Associate Professor of Biblical Studies for Colorado Christian University, Colorado, and Visiting Professor of New Testament at LIFE Institute in Madurai, India. He received his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary, Texas.

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