

## The Theology of the Westminster Standards

### WCF 13.1 – The Beginning of Sanctification (Part 1)

*“I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.” – John Newton*

*“Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” (WSC 35)*

#### I. Introduction: Sanctification

- A. *“The greatest need of my people is ...” – Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813–1843), minister of St. Peter’s Church in Dundee, Scotland)*
- B. *“Seek advance of personal holiness. It is for this the grace of God has appeared to you—see Titus 2:11–12. For this Jesus died; for this he chose you; for this he converted you; to make you holy men—living epistles of Christ—monuments of what God can do in a sinner’s heart.”*  
– M’Cheyne, in a letter to a group of Christians, March 1841

#### II. The Beginning of Sanctification

*“They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (WCF 13.1)*

- A. The words “*further sanctified*” in WCF 13.1 imply that there is an earlier, more basic, and instantaneous kind of “sanctification” in the person who is united to Christ by faith. What is this more basic reality? Look at Rom 6:1–4 for help.
  - 1. **Rom 6:1–4, 12, 14** – *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life ... <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions ... <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”*

*“[T]he person who died to sin no longer lives in that sphere. His tie with it has been broken, and he has been translated into another realm ... This is the decisive cleavage that the apostle has in view; it is the foundation upon which rests his whole conception of a believer’s life, and it is a cleavage, a breach, a translation as really and decisively true in the sphere of moral and religious relationship as in the ordinary experience of death.” – John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” *Works*, 2:279*

*“Because of union with Christ in his death and resurrection I am no longer sin’s slave. Sin is indwelling but not overpowering; for the believer indwelling sin is not enslaving sin.” – Richard Gaffin*

“Definitive” Sanctification: The once-for-all breach with sin’s enslaving power. This is what grounds and leads into the *progressive* sanctification of the believer throughout his/her life.

2. “Definitive” Sanctification elsewhere in the Bible

- a. **1 Cor 1:2** – *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours ...”*
  - b. **1 Cor 6:11** – *“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”*
  - c. **1 John 3:9** – *“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.”*
- B. WCF 13.1 says our sanctification is comes about *“through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection ...”* How does Christ’s own work provide the pattern and power for our “definitive sanctification? Look at Rom 6:9–11 for help.
1. **Rom 6:9–11** – *“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

*“We are compelled to reach the conclusion that it is by virtue of our having died with Christ, and our being raised with him in his resurrection from the dead, that the decisive breach with sin in its power, control, and defilement has been wrought ...”* – John Murray

- C. How is this possible? How does what Jesus did long ago and far away come to me today, according to WCF 13.1?
- D. Practically speaking, why is it so hard for us to believe what Rom 6:2 says about us as believers?

*“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* – Gal 2:20