

The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 13.1 – The Nature of Sanctification (Part 2)

“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. Review: 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. *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.
 - 1. **Rom 6:1–2** – *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”*

“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

“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

- C. Christ’s death and resurrection provide the pattern and power for our “definitive” sanctification.

- 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. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

II. The Progress 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. According to WCF 13.1, what are the two interconnected “means” God uses to sanctify you?

“He that would utterly separate the Spirit from the word had as good burn his Bible.” – John Owen

1. **1 Thess 1:4–5** – *“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”*

B. How does John 15:4–7 encourage you to devote yourself to the Bible for sanctification?

C. According to WCF 13.1, what are the two “more and more” elements that make up our progressive sanctification?

1. Mortification: the gradual weakening of sin’s influence through a constant watchfulness and fighting against sin by the power of Christ’s death applied to us, such that we see (maybe over a long period of time!) an increasing measure of success.
2. Vivification: the gradual enlivening of our hearts to greater degrees of glory, beauty in us by the power of Christ’s resurrection applied to us, such that we experience (maybe over a long period of time!) an increasing enjoyment of God.

1. **1 Thess 4:1–8** – *“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”*

D. What are some practical measures that you have helped you “mortify” sin patterns in your life? What about “vivifying” incremental holiness in your life?

*Think what Spirit dwells within thee;
What a Father’s smile is thine;
What a Savior died to win thee—
Child of Heaven, shouldst thou repine?*

– Henry F. Lyte, “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”