

## The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 13.2 – The Battle of Sanctification (Part 1)

*“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 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*

### I. Review: The Nature of Sanctification

A. Sanctification is a benefit of our union with Christ, flowing from the power of his death and resurrection for us, receive through faith.

1. **Acts 26:18** – “... *that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*”
2. Unlike the “act[s] of God’s free grace” in our justification/adoption, which afford us a new status (legal and familial), sanctification is a “work” of the Spirit that changes us inwardly!

B. Two key dimensions to sanctification as a WHOLE

1. “Definitive” Sanctification: The believer’s once-for-all breach with sin’s enslaving power.
  - a. **Rom 6:1–2** – “*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?*”
1. “Progressive” Sanctification: The ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to make us more holy, as we increasingly (incrementally!) put sin to death and grow into the likeness of Christ.
  - a. **1 Thess 4:1, 3** – “*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 ... <sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*”

B. Two key dimensions to sanctification as a PROCESS

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.

## II. WCF 13.2 – The Extent and Imperfection of Sanctification

*“This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” (WCF 13.2)*

- A. The first thing we learn from WCF 13:2 is that sanctification permeates our whole being. What are some ways that you want God to change (or have seen God change) how you think (intellectually)? What about the things you do (physically)? What about what you say (verbally)?
  
- B. What schemes of the heart do we combat when we pray for God to “sanctify you completely” (1 Thess 5:23)?
  
- C. The second thing we learn from WCF 13:2 is that sanctification is “yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part.” How should this reality influence how we live the Christian life on a daily basis? What about weekly?
  1. **Jer 17:9** – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

*“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” (John Owen, Works, VI, 9).*

*“In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin; and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past finding out.” (John Owen, Works, VI, 172).*

*“And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup>For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’” (Matt 22:15–16)*