

Lesson 17: 2LCF Chapters 13: Of Sanctification

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:12-14

Having dealt with the Christian's change in legal and relational status before God (2LBC 11 - Justification; 2LBC 12 - Adoption), the Confession next moves to the real internal change that God brings about in the life of the believer. This change is sometimes called by various names; however, here it is referred to as sanctification.

The following outline of chapter 13 proves helpful:

Outline

- I. The Description of Sanctification (paragraph 1)
 - A. Its Inception in Definitive Sanctification
 - B. Its Increase in Progressive Sanctification
 - 1. Its Character: "really and personally"
 - 2. Its Source: "through the same virtue"
 - 3. Its Means: "by his Word and Spirit"
 - 4. Its Substance: Sin weaker-grace stronger
 - 5. Its Necessity: "without which no man shall see the Lord"
- II. The Distinctives of Sanctification (paragraph 2-3)
 - A. Struggle with Sin (paragraph 2)
 - 1. The Roots of This Struggle
 - 2. The Nature of This Struggle
 - 3. The Combatants in This Struggle
 - B. Progress in Grace (paragraph 3)
 - 1. The Difficulty of This Progress
 - 2. The Certainty of This Progress
 - 3. The Quality of This Progress ¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 206-07.

Paragraph 1.

They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are also farther sanctified, really and personally, through the same virtue, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts of it are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.
Acts 20:32; Rom. 6:5,6; John 17:17; Eph. 3:16-19; 1 Thess. 5:21-23; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:24; Col. 1:11; 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14

Exposition

As the Confession moves to the topic of sanctification, it provides us with a helpful definition, while also distinguishing between "definitive" and "progressive" sanctification.

Several theologians have offered definitions of sanctification in general. Here are a few for your consideration:

Sam Waldron

To 'sanctify' in the Bible is to set apart from common use to God. When something is sanctified, it becomes God's special possession. In common popular and theological usage the term 'sanctification' is used of being set apart in one's practical conduct from sin to righteousness in a progressive manner in the Christian life.¹⁷⁹

Jeffrey Smith

The word translated in the New Testament as "sanctification" is sometimes translated, "holiness." It is the word *hagiasmos*, the noun form of the verb "to sanctify," "to make holy" (*hagiazō*). The basic meaning of the verb is to set apart from that which is common or unclean and to consecrate unto God. The Hebrew counterpart (*qadash*), which is translated by this Greek word in the Septuagint, is sometimes used of inanimate objects...

In the New Testament, when applied to Christians, to be holy, or to be sanctified, refers primarily to being set apart from sin and uncleanness and devoted to God and righteousness. It is also used to refer to the attitude of heart and walk of life reflecting this separation and devotion.¹⁸⁰

Joel Beeke & Paul Smalley

Sanctification is the work of God by which he makes people holy. Though difficult to recognize in English, this meaning is found in the etymology of the very word sanctification (Latin: *sanctus*, "holy," plus *facer*, "make").¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 207.

¹⁸⁰ Jeffrey Smith, "Chapter Thirteen: Of Sanctification," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 234.

¹⁸¹ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2021), 628.

Johannes Wollebius

[It] is the free act of God, by which the faithful, who are engrafted into Christ through faith and justified through the Holy Spirit, are progressively set free from their innate sinfulness and restored to his image, so that they may be made fit to glorify him by good works.¹⁸²

In many of these definitions, we find the two basic forms of sanctification that are outlined in the Confession: “Definite Sanctification” and “Progressive Sanctification.” In the paragraphs below, we will distinguish between the two and outline the practical implications of both.

Definite Sanctification

Definite (or “initial”) sanctification is clearly spelled out where the framers describe the Christian’s sanctification in these terms: *“They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection...”*

Today, when many think of sanctification, they think only in terms of progressive sanctification. But here the Confession establishes another biblical category in which to think about this important experience in the life of a believer. Waldron provides this definition of definitive sanctification:

Definitive sanctification is simply another way of referring to the basic and radical change that takes place in a sinners, moral and ethical condition when he is united to Christ in effectual calling and regeneration. It reminds us of the fact that progressive sanctification does not take place in a vacuum. It presupposes effectual calling, regeneration, union with Christ and even justification.¹⁸³

Waldron makes the following biblical arguments for definitive sanctification:

- The adjective, holy, is used to describe all Christians as “*holy ones*” or “*saints*.” (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1, 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 3:12).
- The verb, to make holy, is used in the *aorist passive* (Acts 20:32, 26:18, Rom. 15:16, 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11).
- The plain teaching of passages like:
 - **1 Corinthians 6:11**: “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”
 - **1 Peter 1:2**: “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work (*sanctification*) of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...”
 - **Galatians 2:20**: “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.”
- The noun, “holiness” or “sanctification,” is used of conversion (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2).¹⁸⁴

The scriptural text that definitively teaches this doctrine is **Romans 6:1-11**:

¹⁸² Johannes Wollebius, *Compendium*, 1.31.(1).2 (171).

¹⁸³ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 208.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

1 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? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 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.

Waldron comments on this passage:

This command to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin is not positive thinking. Positive thinking teaches that by counting or reckoning ourselves to have died to sin, we make it so. This command, however, is based on the reality that we have died to sin. This reality, however, it is not a matter of sight. It is not so externally obvious that it does not need to be counted so. That we have died to sin is a matter of faith. Hence, there is the necessity that we reckon it to be so. Paul exhorts the Roman believers to maintain such an attitude, because it is a basic perspective for the pursuit of holiness in the Christian.¹⁸⁵

John Stott provides the following illustration to demonstrate this reality:

Suppose there is a man called John Jones, an elderly Christian believer, who is looking back upon his long life. His career is divided by his conversion into two parts, the old self-John Jones before his conversion-and the new self-John Jones after his conversion. The old self and the new self (or the "old man" and the "new man") are not John Jones' two natures; they are the two halves of his life, separated by the new birth. At conversion, signified in baptism, John Jones, the old self, died through union with Christ, the penalty of his sin borne. At the same time John Jones rose again from death, a new man, to live a new life to God.

Now John Jones is every believer. We are John Jones, if we are in Christ. The way in which our old self died is that we were crucified with Christ.

Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, of me before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun.¹⁸⁶

Progressive Sanctification

Once a Christian has enjoyed the blessing of definitive or initial sanctification, the journey to Christlikeness begins in progressive sanctification. The framers describe this in the following words: *"They who are united to Christ... are also farther sanctified, really and personally, through the*

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 211.

¹⁸⁶ John Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 6-8* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 38-39.

same virtue, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts of it are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Jeffrey Smith provides a comparison between justification and sanctification that clearly details the process of ongoing sanctification (not italics):

Justification has to do with our forgiveness and acceptance with God, for the sake of Christ righteousness freely put to our account. *Sanctification has to do with our being made righteous in our own life experience by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Justification has to do with our bad record being once and for all cleared in heaven. *Sanctification has to do with our bad heart and behaviour being changed on earth.* Justification is a finished and completed work, and a believer is perfectly justified forever from the moment he has joined to Christ through faith. *Sanctification is an imperfect work that begins at conversion and progressively grows and increases and is never perfect until we reach glory.* Justification is a declaration of God about us, that we are forgiven and accepted by him is righteous for Christ sake. *Sanctification is the work of God within us by which we are more and more conformed to the image of his Son.*¹⁸⁷

The following passages plainly teach the progressive nature of sanctification:

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Hebrews 10:14

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Philippians 2:12–13

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:20–24

But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Hebrews 12:14

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

¹⁸⁷ Jeffrey Smith, "Chapter Thirteen: Of Sanctification," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 235.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 12:14.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Paragraph 2.

This sanctification is throughout the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abides still some remnants of corruption in every part, wherefrom arises a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

1 Thess. 5:23; Rom. 7:18, 23; Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:11

Exposition

Despite the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, the Christian will never be fully free from sin in this life. But rather, there will be a “continual and irreconcilable war” within him. This is often called “remaining sin.” Here the Confession preemptively counters a view (entire sanctification) that would take hold in the Wesleyan movement less than one-hundred years later.

Kim Riddlebarger offers this quote from Wesley on this doctrine:

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning concerning Christian perfection, and the manner and time of receiving it, which I believe may be useful to set down.

1. By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions. I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our Hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility. And I do not contend for the term sinless, though I do not object against it.
2. As to the manner. I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant. But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.
3. As to the time. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before. I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary. If it must be many years after justification, I would be glad to know how many. And how many days or months, or even years, can any one allow to be between perfection and death? How far from justification it must be; and how near to death?¹⁸⁸

Speaking to the view of entire sanctification, Jeffrey Smith comments:

Christian perfectionism tends to produce despair in the heart of the truly sincere and humble child of God. He sees so much sin still clinging to everything he does and sees himself still falling so short of what he ought to be. Therefore, he is caused to feel that he

¹⁸⁸ This quote can be found at <https://www.kimriddlebarger.com/the-riddleblog/on-john-wesleys-plain-account-of-christian-perfection>,

must be some kind of second-class Christian who hasn't discovered the secret of the deeper Christian life.¹⁸⁹

Instead, Smith adds the following: "There is struggle and conflict in the Christian life. This is not a bad sign. This is not a sign that a person is not a Christian. This is one of the evidences that you are a Christian."¹⁹⁰

John Murray comments on this:

If there is remaining indwelling sin, there must be the conflict which Paul describes (for example) in Rom. 7:14ff. It is futile to argue that this conflict is not normal. If there is still sin in any degree in one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, then there is tension, yes, contradiction in the heart of that person. Indeed, the more sanctified the person is, the more conformed to the image of his Savior, the more he must recoil against every lack of conformity to the holiness of God. The deeper his apprehension of the majesty of God, the greater the intensity of his love to God, the more persistent his yearning for the attainment of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more conscious will he be of the gravity of the sin which remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it. The more closely he comes to the holiest of all, the more he apprehends the sinfulness that is his and he must cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24).¹⁹¹

Paragraph 3.

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, pressing after an heavenly life, in evangelical obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in his Word has prescribed to them.

Rom. 7:23; Rom. 6:14; Eph. 4:15,16; 2 Cor. 3:18, 7:1

Jeffrey Smith summarizes:

What is evangelical obedience? This is common language found in the Puritans but it's a concept rarely heard of today. What does it mean? The term "evangelical obedience" includes several important ideas. It is obedience growing out of faith in the gospel, as opposed to a legal obedience that is seeking to obtain salvation as a reward of our efforts. It is obedience that arises from a regenerate heart and is, therefore, marked by a sincere desire to honor and glorify God and our Savior Jesus Christ. And finally, it is an obedience that, though it is not perfect, is also not satisfied with anything less than obedience to all that Christ's commands.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 248.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 248-49.

¹⁹¹ John Murray, *Redemption, Accomplished and Applied*, 144-45.

¹⁹² Jeffrey Smith, "Chapter Thirteen: Of Sanctification," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 251.