

Westminster Confession of Faith

Chapter 13--Of Sanctification

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Eph. 2:8-10

Read Titus 2:11ff. By way of an introduction, discuss the meaning of “grace” in these two passages as applied to holiness.

I became a Christian once for all upon the basis of the finished work of Christ through faith; that is justification. The Christian life, sanctification, operates on the same basis, but moment by moment. There is the same base (Christ's work) and the same instrument (faith); the only difference is that one is once for all and the other is moment by moment...If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will have sorrow, but if we live in this way, we will not only serve the Lord, but in place of sorrow, He will be our song. That is the difference. The 'how' of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith moment by moment.

Francis Schaeffer

1. Earlier, we distinguished justification from sanctification. How are they different?

Illustration: Ted Dorman in his article in a recent issue of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* would have evangelical Protestants reach out to Roman Catholics in terms of the following proposal. He writes:

Further progress will be made when attempts to reconcile two very different languages of salvation via verbal compromise give way to the sort of Biblical theology advocated by [Paul] Stuhlmacher and like-minded theologians. In the meantime, whatever significant differences remain between Protestants and Catholics regarding the doctrine of justification might be mitigated, if not fully resolved, by the following affirmation set forth by a number of Protestants and Catholics seeking reconciliation with the body of Christ: “Justification by grace alone through a faith that is never alone” (cf. Eph 2:8-10).”

“orthodox” or “unorthodox”???? ?Depending on the way it is read/interpreted. E.g.

In what sense might our confession agree with this?

True faith will show itself in works—such that in this sense true and saving faith is never “alone.” It is accompanied by all the saving graces including sanctification. Again, while justification is a distinct salvation category, it is never “alone” but one of many within the *ordo salutis*. It is impossible therefore that one is justified but who is not partaking of all the saving graces as including sanctification. God doesn’t do a part of salvation without the other parts... it is all or nothing...

In what sense would our confession disagree with this?

Saving Faith is distinct from “works of righteousness.” Justification as such is a category in its own right that is by “faith alone”—this in so far as faith is a resting in, trusting in, confidence in the completed, sufficient work of Christ ALONE. Moreover, we would not want to affirm any conception of “justification” that is “in process” or is incomplete such as to await further graces...

Perhaps better we could say that “justification by faith alone is never alone...” I.e. the same spirit that produced justifying faith is *manifest in its sanctifying power*.

2. What is the relation of sanctification to regeneration? (see Hodge)

Regeneration is the commencement of sanctification, and sanctification is the completion of the work commenced in regeneration. As regeneration is an act of God's free grace, so sanctification is a gracious work of God, and eminently of the Holy Spirit.

A.A. Hodge

3. Confessional language pertaining to sanctification makes use of the phrase "more and more." What do you think is the purpose of such language?

4. Sanctification has both a "negative" and a "positive" dimension. What are these dimensions, as the Confession describes them? (section III)

Sanctification includes the gradual destruction of the sinful nature, the strengthening of grace in the new man, purification of the heart and mind, and the actions that proceed therein.

Is sanctification perfected in this life? (section III)

I John 1:10 I Corinthians 10:12

Galatians 5:16 II Corinthians 10:3

9 J.C. Ryle states that "the spirit never lies dormant and idle within the soul: He always makes His presence known by the fruit He causes to be borne in heart, character and life." (p.18) He also says that "sanctification is the outcome and inseparable consequence of regeneration." (p.17) What does this mean in relation to the popular notion of such a thing as a "carnal Christian?"¹

10. Is sanctification perfected in this life? (1John 1:10 "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.")

LQ#78

Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers?

The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit; whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.

I. Biblical considerations

A. Gal. 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

B. 1 Cor. 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

C. 2 Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Historical Views of Perfectionism:

Pelagians assert that the law of God only applies to voluntary exercises and actions (not the motivations to do evil, called concupiscence) and God would not require something of us we could not obey.

¹For instance, Bill Bright's "Spirit Filled Life" (see Bright's *The Secret: How to Live with Purpose and Power*, 1989 or his *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?*, 1966)) A view that can be classified as within the general construct of Wesleyan theology but adapted and modified under various names such as "The Victorious Life" views and "Spirit Filled Life" Views. It is useful to note that each of these views are an attempt to explain the phenomena of a nominally Christian people who are not following after Christ in daily obedience, but who later may experience some kind of turn so as to experience a higher, deeper more abundant life of obedience to Christ. In effect, the explanations given by the above views are to present a two step experience-- the first bringing regeneration/justification, the second bringing sanctification in some special sense of that word. For Wesleyanism, the person is said to have been regenerated but later experience a "second baptism" or "second blessing" resulting in an abrupt escalation of blessing and Christian obedience. According to the Victorious life view, one is justified through repentance and faith but later is given new truth plus greater faith so as to experience a higher, deeper and more abundant live of victorious living. Now the key thing here is some kind of "second thing." Bright's reasons for why some Christians are not "spirit filled": 1) "lack of knowledge" which "causes Christians to live in spiritual poverty, not knowing or experiencing the great riches and resources that are their heritage in Christ." 2) "a reliance on self" where Bright then tells us about three kinds of people in the bible, a) the "natural Man" or non-believer, b) the "spiritual man" or "believer who lives by faith and obeys God through the enabling of the Holy Spirit) and c) the "carnal man" who is spiritually impotent and fruitless because he trusts his own efforts to live the Christian life.

Pelagius utilized Leviticus 19:2, “You shall be holy for I the Lord your God are holy” and Matthew 5:48, “You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” in support of this argument. Augustine said, “No one lives in this corruptible body, however righteous he may be, without sins of some kind.” Therefore, the evidence of true election in Christ is not perfection but rather perseverance until death.

The Arminian view states that men can do nothing right without the grace of God and even with this grace no one can keep the original Adamic law of perfection. They maintain that God, for Christ’s sake, has lowered the demands of the law in the case of believers, from absolute perfection to faith and evangelical obedience. It is the privilege and duty of all men in this life to attain perfect love and sincere obedience to the gospel law, which they call gracious or Christian perfection.

Gospel centered sanctification: A person can understand our justification to be by grace through faith alone in order to gain God’s favor, one could then “work out their salvation” such that God’s continued favor is predicated upon their good works. In the Galatians heresy, the Judaizers were attempting to add the Mosaic law to Christ in order to be in right standing with the church and subsequently right standing with God. While the Mosaic Law cannot be equated with “works” the principle is such that anyone who adds anything by way of a requirement to gain God’s favor apart from faith in Christ alone will in effect deny grace on the back end of salvation even if affirming it on the front end.

As the gospel is applied to right living—“Jonathan Edwards points out that ‘true virtue’ is only possible for those who have experienced the grace of the gospel. Any person who is trying to earn their salvation does the right thing in order to get into heaven, or in order to better their self-esteem. In other words, the ultimate motive is self-interest. But persons who know they are totally accepted already do the right thing out of sheer delight in righteousness for its own sake. Only in the gospel do you obey God for God’s sake, and not for what God will give you. Only in the gospel do you love people for their sake (not yours), do good for its own sake (not yours), and obey God for his sake (not yours). Only the gospel makes “doing the right thing” a joy and delight, not a burden or a means to an end.”

(1) Many evangelical churches teach you are saved by your surrender to Christ plus right beliefs and behavior. This can reject the grace-first principle. They teach we are saved because of the level of our faith, instead of through faith. This makes our performance the savior. It is not the level but the object of our faith that saves us.

(2) Liberal churches often teach that it doesn’t matter so much what you believe as long as you are a loving and good person. This also rejects the grace-first principle by teaching that virtue is enough to get us to God. It negates the necessity of the cross and provides no hope for bad people.

(3) Legalism is another example of a thwarted view of sanctification. Such a church might ask of its members conformity in styles of dress, dating, diet, and so on. Cultural imperialism, especially among missionaries, can be another form of legalism.

Tim Keller

19. How then should we understand Hebrews 12:14

Heb. 12:14

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

20. Sanctification—Freedom or Religious Oppression

Rom. 6:1

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For whoever has died is freed from sin. **8** But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him... **15** What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! **16** Do you not know that if you present

yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Sanctification is to be set free from the onerous burdens working our idols eventually to our own destruction

- The gospel is the good news that we are being set free from the heavy idols of self-righteousness that is related to our performance
Gal. 5:1 For **freedom** Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

It is to be set free from even the fear of death itself

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you **free** in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

WCF 11:

1: Concerning **justification**: not for anything **wrought in them**, or **done by them**, but for Christ's sake alone... they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith: which faith they have not of themselves it is the gift of God.

2: **Faith...** is the alone instrument of justification, **yet is not alone**.. but is ever accompanied with **all other saving graces, and is no dead faith**, but walketh by love.

WCF: The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the Gospel consists in their freedom from... his present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin;

Ask yourself, do you really believe that to "SIN" and to be given over to "selfish ambition" is your way to happiness and "freedom"? Have you bought into the worlds lie, that to be free from God and his mission in the world is to be liberated?

Is Sanctification the "small print" of our salvation contract with Christ?

The grace of salvation applied to our sanctification—not always where we tend to associate grace—in fact, we tend to avoid the topic of sanctification as if to avoid the "small type at the bottom of a contract or sales pitch—you know the stuff that makes the product less desirable.. is that the way it is with Christianity- salvation is to be set free from fear of condemnation—but then to put us in bondage to all the rules and regulations that suck the life out of life abundant, at least in this life

The Power of Oppression

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** he saved us,

8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

Oppression Explored:

- The oppression of "various passions and pleasures" (Gluttony)
- The oppression of "Malice and envy" (Covetousness)
- The oppression of "Disobedience" (pride)
- The oppression of Endless talk devoid of walk (Hypocrisy)
- The oppression of incivility (chip on shoulder.. contenteousness)
passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.