



**Union with Christ:
We Have Him and
All the Covenant
Blessings He Won**

Sanctification - Revisited

WCF Chapter 13

The *Nature* of Sanctification (WCF 13.1)

1. 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.

The *Nature* of Sanctification – WLC Q/A 75

Q. 75. What is sanctification?

Answer: Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are **in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God;** having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, **and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.**

The *Nature* of Sanctification – WLC Q/A 77

Q. 77. Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?

Answer: Although sanctification be **inseparably joined** with justification, **yet they differ**, in that God in justification impute[s] the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuse[s] grace, and enable[s] to the exercise thereof; **in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued:** [justification] do[es] equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; [sanctification] is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

The Experience of Sanctification: (WCF 13.2 & 13.3)

2. 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.

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 doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (See also WLC # 78)

Key Points:

A. A thorough-going sanctification. Since sin is throughout our whole being, the work of sanctification is also throughout our whole being: our hearts, our minds, our wills, our bodies.

The Experience of Sanctification

Key Points Cont'd:

- B. An Incomplete experiential Sanctification.* The ongoing work of sanctification is “imperfect” in this life. It is NOT defective; it is incomplete. C. VanDixhorn, *Confessing the Faith*, p. 182.
- C. Life (vivification) at war with death.* There is a WAR between the remaining corruption of the “flesh” and the Spirit. In being joined to Christ by faith, the Christian is “conscripted into ‘a continual and irreconcilable war’” precisely because the Spirit that brought new life is at war with sin and death. C. VanDixhorn, *Confessing the Faith*, p. 183.

The Experience of Sanctification

Key Points Cont'd:

- D. We may lose many battles, but the war is won.* In this war, the remaining corruption (that sin still “in us” even though we are not “in sin”) may win many battles over many years, but will not ultimately prevail. The believer’s victory in this war is certain because of the continual supply of strength from the “sanctifying Spirit of Christ” who will cause the saints to grow in grace and holiness.
- E. Become what we already are.* Because of the reality of being united to the resurrected and ascended Christ, having been brought from death to life, having escaped the dominion of sin through the death of the Lord Jesus, having the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit, believers are called to live experientially in light of those truths.

Sanctification – Some Final Thoughts

1. It is a mistake to think that sanctification is the first important thing we've considered because it is the first “practical” thing that we've considered. The WCF sees everything that went before as “practically” essential to the ongoing work of trusting God in obedience.
2. Do not view “progressive” sanctification as the means by which God equips us to work ourselves OUT of the need for a Savior.
3. Do not lose sight of the fact that a significant part of sanctification is recognizing more and more the deep reality of our sin.
4. Sanctification takes place within the body of Christ. All the members are to be collectively engaged in the ongoing war for each other.
5. Sanctification should never devolve into self-righteousness or self-justification. If those are the outcomes, then the believer is not growing in the sanctification won by Christ.

Good Works

WCF Chapter 16

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

Comment and Context:

1. This is an uncommonly long chapter in this section of the Confession - 7 sections. CF. Adoption has 1; Sanctification has 3
2. It's long because Good Works is being used to address other doctrines: Justification, Sanctification, The Role of Scripture, The Role of the Law, Rebellion and Common Grace.
3. The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation Doctrine, clearly expressed at the Council of Trent (1545-1565), provides much of the context for this chapter.

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

Brief Introduction to Roman Catholic Doctrine of Works.

1. Grace was infused at baptism and original sin was washed away. The recipient of baptism was “justified” as to that original sin. But, as to the rest of one’s life, justification was secured only by cooperating with grace which expresses itself in love and good works.
2. “Good works” include conduct consistent with biblical ethics, but also include acts declared “good” by the church, e.g., vow of poverty, vows of celibacy, pilgrimages, crusades, acts of piety.
3. “Good works” assist in securing one’s final justification. If the “good works” in this life are insufficient, then the purging of purgatory will be necessary to secure the righteousness required.

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

Brief Introduction to Roman Catholic Doctrine of Works.

Council of Trent

Canon 24: If anyone says that the justice [righteousness before God] received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase [of one's righteousness before God], let him be anathema.

Canon 32: If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits [toward justification] of him justified . . . Let him be anathema.

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

Brief Introduction to Roman Catholic Doctrine of Works.

4. The merit secured by the “Good Works” of some exceeds the righteousness that was required of them. Their works of “supererogation” are available in a “treasury of merit” to be dispensed to those whose “good works” fall short of the righteousness required.

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

	Roman Catholic	WCF
What Are Good Works?	Those actions commanded by Scripture AND those determined to be “good works” by the Church.`	Only those actions commanded by the Word of God.

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

	Roman Catholic	WCF
What do Good Works accomplish?	Secure temporal benefits and also secure justification.	Provide evidence of living (“lively”) faith; manifest the believer’s thankfulness to God; strengthen the believer’s assurance; edify the body; adorn the profession of the gospel. . . 16.2 & 16.5

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

	Roman Catholic	WCF
Who has the ability to do “Good Works?”	God AND man independent of God.	God alone, through the Spirit of Christ, working in the believer (16.3). But, the believer is not to be negligent; but be diligent to stir up the grace of God.
Can one secure pardon and eternal life by “Good Works?”	Yes	No

Good Works (WCF Chapter 16)

	Roman Catholic	WCF
Can one execute more “Good Works” than the righteousness of God requires?	Yes	No 16.4
Are one’s “Good Works” acceptable to (satisfying the righteousness of) God?	Yes. One’s “good works” are acceptable apart from Christ.	NO, to the extent that they are “good”, they proceed from the Holy Spirit (16.6). But, the good works of believers are accepted in Christ

Perseverance of the Saints

WCF Chapter 17

Perseverance: Key Questions

- 1. Will all those whom the Father effectually calls by the Holy Spirit and joins them to Christ by faith (a gift given to them), continue to persevere in that faith throughout life and death and be eternally saved?**

Yes. They “can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” WCF 17.1

Perseverance: Key Questions

2. How can we be so certain?

Because, perseverance in faith does not depend upon the will of the believer. Rather it depends upon “the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace;” WCF 17.2

See John 10:28 where Jesus says “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Perseverance: Key Questions

3. Can this perseverance be messy, falling into grievous sins that do harm to our relationship with God and with others?

Yes it can be.

The cause: “temptations of Satan and the world,” the remaining corruption of sin within us, and our neglecting the “means of [our] perseverance.” WCF 17.3.

The consequences: God’s fatherly displeasure, the grieving of the Holy Spirit, the deprivation of some of the graces and comforts of our salvation, the hardening of our hearts, the wounding of our consciences, the harming and scandalizing of others, and the bringing of temporal [but NOT eternal] judgments upon ourselves as our Father disciplines us for our restoration.

Perseverance: Key Questions

4. How should we understand those passages that seem to describe members of a local church falling away and not coming back?

⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Hebrews 6: 4-8.

Perseverance: Key Questions

4. How should we understand those passages that seem to describe members of a local church falling away and not coming back?

These are best understood as **warning passages**, recognizing that those who have gone “out from us, . . . were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”

These passages our sober reminders that in the visible church, there are those who are not united to Jesus Christ by faith. That sober reality raises the question of the believers “assurance” of salvation - a topic we take up next week.