

Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1-3 – October 15, 2025

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.

[Those whom God has called and justified will also be made holy in their whole person. This sanctification comes through the power of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit living in them. The reign of sin is broken, and its desires are weakened and put to death more and more, while believers are strengthened and enabled to live in true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.]

- 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.”
- Romans 6:5-6 – “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. 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.”
- Hebrews 12:14 – “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

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.

[This work of sanctification continues throughout the whole life of a believer. Even though sin's power has been weakened and subdued, parts of the old sinful nature still remain. Because of this, there's a continual struggle within—the flesh fighting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. Yet, through the strength of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the new nature grows stronger and overcomes, so that believers are enabled more and more to live in true righteousness and holiness in this life.]

- Galatians 5:17 – “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”
- Romans 7:23-25 – “But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
- 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.”

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.

[In this life, sanctification is never complete. Sin still remains in every part of us. Therefore, even the best works of believers are imperfect and stained with weakness. Yet, through continual growth in grace, the Holy Spirit enables true believers to press on—dying more and more to sin and becoming more and more alive to righteousness.]

- Philippians 3:12-14 – “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
- 1 John 1:8 – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
- Romans 6:11 – “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Objections

Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and others blur the lines between justification and sanctification, thinking of salvation as one continuous process.

- Justification is an act of God, not a process.
- Sanctification is a process that inevitably follows justification, but doesn’t contribute to it.
- “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:14
- “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Phil. 1:6
- “Therefore, since we *have been justified* by faith, we *have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1
- “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Romans 11:29

“If believers are already justified, why does sanctification still matter?”

Some argue that since justification makes us righteous in God’s sight, pursuing holiness is unnecessary or even legalistic. After all, our standing before God doesn’t depend on our works.

- Sanctification is not a *requirement to earn* salvation, but it is a *result of* salvation.
- The same grace that justifies also transforms. “Faith apart from works is dead.”

“Christians shouldn’t struggle with sin if they’ve been made new.”

Some say that if we are “new creations,” then real believers shouldn’t experience deep conflict or repeated failures.

- There is an already/not yet tension in Scripture.
- Romans 7 – the struggle proves spiritual life.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does sanctification differ from justification, and why is it important to keep those two doctrines distinct but connected in your Christian life?
- 2) In what ways do you experience the “continual war” between the flesh and the Spirit described in WCF 13.2?
- 3) If sanctification is imperfect in this life, how should that shape your attitude toward both your own growth and the weaknesses of other believers?
- 4) How does knowing that sanctification is ultimately God’s work give you hope and motivation to pursue holiness daily?