

Chapter 13: Of Sanctification

K. C. Juntunen

1 Review

1.1 We defended the legitimacy of confessions

1.1.1 We started with some historical context

At the start of our survey of the Confession we talked about how our confession has its birth alongside the Westminster Confession of Faith. We had an orthodox confession in the first London Baptist Confession. But, in England, the prevailing notion of baptists went back to a bloody rebellion in Münster. In reality, these were Anabaptists, and are the forefathers of the Mennonites, and the Amish. From the beginning, we've have more in common with the Presbyterians than with the Anabaptists, although the Presbyterians tend to use the Sword of the State against us when they get hold of it.

1.1.2 What are some uses of confessions?

- A public affirmation and defense of the truth
 - This is usually the cause of confessions. In response to a heresy, clear language is developed to positively state Scriptural truth.
- A public standard of fellowship and discipline
 - A confession draws a line so we can more simply assess whether someone is one of us or not.
 - It also provides clear language for church discipline
- A concise standard by which to evaluate ministers of the Word
 - It's easier to tell if a prospective pastor is orthodox, or not.
- Contribute to a sense of historical continuity
 - It's easier to look back in history, and to tell where we came from, and how we got here.

1.2 Where are we now?

We've covered 12 chapters so far.

The very first chapter, Of the Holy Scriptures, tells us how we know what we know. This is where the 66 books are explicitly named, and the Apocrypha is explicitly excluded. We learned that Scripture is to be believed because of its authority, which doesn't depend on the testimony of any man or church, but on God himself.

In chapter 2, we talked about the nature of God: his unchangeable perfection, infinitude, his triune nature, and righteous judgments. We understood how, even without sin, there's an infinite difference between Him as created, and us as creature.

We talked about God's decree, in chapter 3. We saw how his decree is a blueprint for history. He's ordained everything that comes to pass.

This was followed by two chapters on Creation and Providence which tell how the eternal decree is worked out in history.

Following this are three chapters discussing what we believe about man's condition in history. We covered how man fell, how God provided redemption through a mediator. We talked about the state and condition of man's will during the different stages of history.

Following all this we started on the "golden chain of redemption." Today, we've come to sanctification, whose chain link comes between adoption, and glorification.

Latin: Sanctus – Sacred, Consecrate, Sanctify, Saint

English: Holy, Hallow, Hallowe'en, Health, Helga

Hebrew: kadesh

Greek: hagios

Sam Waldron says, that to sanctify means "to set apart from common use to God. When something becomes sanctified, it becomes Gods special possession."

What does the catechism say (Q. 36)? What is sanctification?

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.

So we're talking about holiness. This is a communicable attribute of God. We can't be omnipresent (incommunicable), but we can become holy.

Stephen Charnock says, "This is more affixed as an epithet to his name than any other. You never find it expressed 'His mighty name,' or 'his His

wise name;’ but His great name, and most of all, His holy name¹.”

“It is his glory and beauty. Holiness is the honor of the creature; sanctification and honor are linked together (1 Thess. iv, 4); much more is it the honor of God; it is the image of God in the creature².”

“In Ps. xxvii. 4, David desires “to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his holy temple;” that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple³ (Isa. xlv. 11);”

“ ‘The whole earth is full of thy glory;’ that is, of his holiness in his laws, and in his judgments against sin, that being the attribute applauded by them before⁴.”

Without this attribute of God. If his holiness was diminished, we’d have no need of a savior; he could just pass over sin. But then he wouldn’t be worth worshiping. It’s the pure perfection of his holiness he’s praised for.

Charnock continues, “The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches: holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure⁵.” With that in mind, how amazing is it that he allows us to partake?

But John Murray says “the prevailing character of every regenerate person is holiness.”

2 The description of sanctification

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 personally¹ through the same virtue, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them;² the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed,³ and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified,⁴ and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces,⁵ to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.⁶

1. Ac 20:32; Ro 6:5-6.

¹Stephen Charnock. *The Existence and Attributes of God*. Location 15,507.

²Charnock. *Attributes*. Location 15,557.

³Charnock. *Attributes*. Location 15,561.

⁴Charnock. *Attributes*. Location 15,566.

⁵Charnock. *Attributes*. Location 15,511.

- Ac 20:32 “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”
 - Ro 6:5-6: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
2. Jn 17:17; Eph 3:16-19; 1Th 5:21-23.
- “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”
 - “²¹ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. ²² Abstain from all appearance of evil. ²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God”
3. Ro 6:14. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”
4. Gal 5:24. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
5. Col 1:11. “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;”
6. 2Co 7:1; Heb 12:14.
- “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
 - **“ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”**

2.1 It's inception in definitive sanctification

In Romans 8:30 we have what's been called the *Golden Chain of Redemption*: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Sanctification goes right there between justified and glorified. If you want to see a really detailed map of all this, just Google William Perkins' *Ordo Salutis*.

On the subject of being "united to Christ," our own Benjamin Keach says,

Brethren, there is a Necessity of Union of Nature between the Sanctifying Saviour, and the Sanctified Sinner. Our Union with Christ, and Sanctification, is the effects of the Hypostatical *Union* of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ. Every believer is Justified by his Blood, and Sanctified by his Spirit. These are attributed to his taking our Nature into *Union* with his Divine Person⁶.

This phrase, "are also farther sanctified" presupposes that some sanctification has already occurred. It's important to note that before we come to sanctification, we must have been called, and justified, *etc.* If the one didn't happen, the other didn't either.

John Murray makes a distinction between two kinds of sanctification: definitive sanctification, and progressive sanctification. Sam Waldron cites a few passages to explain what is meant. John 3:3-9

³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. ⁸ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

⁶Renihan, *Baptist Symbolics, Volume 2*. location 6,235.

1 John 2:29, 3:9-10

²⁹ If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. . . . ⁹ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

So, I take it that Waldron regards being born again as identical to definitive sanctification.

Definitive sanctification indicates the part of the chain where God lays his claim on us, and there's a change in our relationship to sin. Our conversion is foundational to our progressive sanctification. It's also why, in spite of our sometimes embarrassing conduct, the Bible calls believers "saints" or "holy ones." We have been set aside by God, and for God, and in that sense we can be called saints.

Our confession offers Acts 20:32 for reference: "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." It sounds like it's talking about a definitive act. And Acts 26:18, Jesus sends Paul to the Gentiles,

¹⁸ To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

And there's 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Waldron says, that the verbs in these passages are aorist passive. He continues,

This tells us two things. Firstly, sanctification took place in the past. Secondly, the sanctified person was sanctified by someone else. God sanctified him. God was active, and man was passive in the sanctifying act.

This is not to be confused with justification. What's justification? Justification a legal declaration of righteousness. What's "definitive" sanctification? This refers to a "radical and practical break with sin at conversion," as Waldron says. Or, as our confession has it "the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed." Murray says it's our "freedom from the dominion of sin."

Waldron says definitive sanctification is really two things. First, a moral heart change, and second being in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:1-11 is a key passage. (Our confession references Ro 6:5-6.)

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.

In verse two Paul says that we "have died to sin." (Notice how the doctrine of sanctification has much to do with the terminology of birth and death.) He is anticipating an argument from the previous passage. He just made the case that we are justified by faith apart from works. Because of the scandalous doctrine of justification by faith alone, we're accused by Catholics, East and West, of saying we can continue in sin. The doctrine of sanctification, as presented in Romans 6, and in our confession is a denial

of that. In fact, paragraph 1 concludes by saying no one will see the lord without true holiness.

Considering the phrase “having a new heart and a new Spirit created in them,” Renihan gives an interesting clarification:

It may be thought that the new life granted in regeneration produces a third, previously-dead component to human nature, a “spirit” complementing body and soul. This conclusion is incorrect. The clause seems to be a paraphrase of Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,” the idea of which is that the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in the hearts of believers.

2.2 It’s increase in progressive sanctification

Usually when we talk about sanctification, I think we’re talking about progressive sanctification. We get a sense of growth by degrees when we read this paragraph. Twice it uses the phrase “more and more.” It says that the lusts of the body of sin “are more and more weakened and mortified.” And in opposition to the “body of sin” there are saving graces which are “more and more quickened and strengthened.” Sanctification is like a spark of new life in a dead body which is now regaining sensation.

As I mentioned before, we must be called and justified, *etc.* before sanctification begins. No improvement of conduct prior to our being “united to Christ” can be called sanctification. On the other hand, if there’s been no sanctification, we have serious grounds to question our union with Christ. There’s a necessary, one-way relationship between this union, and our sanctification. Sanctification doesn’t lead to the union; but the union necessarily results in sanctification.

2.2.1 It’s character: ‘really and personally’

Until now, man has been passive. God redeemed us, God called us, God justified us, God adopted us, and God sanctified us. But there’s a change when we think about progressive sanctification. Now passages like Phillipians 2:12 apply to the situation: “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Or I John 3:3 “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

No one can see your justification, or adoption, but here’s where there begins to be a change that’s measurable and observable by other people.

2.2.2 It's source: 'through the same virtue'

But this isn't just an exercise of the human will. If that's the case, your will can be praised and you already have your reward, because "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." But our confession says we are "farther sanctified" "through the same virtue." What virtue is that? "The virtue of Christ's death and resurrection." The same power that raised Jesus from the grave makes us holy, and changes the way we live observably, and measurably.

Maybe it doesn't seem like there's progress from day to day, but you should be able to look back and see the Lord's work over time.

2.2.3 It's means: 'by his Word and Spirit'

In our catechism, questions 34 through 36 ask in succession "what is justification," "what is adoption," and "what is sanctification." Both justification, and sanctification are said to be acts of God's free grace in the answers. But sanctification is called a "work of God's free grace⁷." It says this work renews us in the whole man, and enables us to die to sin, and live to righteousness.

In progressive sanctification, we've got our work cut out for us. Owen says "be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." But we're not doing it alone. The Lord is working too. In fact, if he isn't, this isn't getting done.

John Murray says,

It is imperative that we realize our complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We must not forget, of course, that our activity is enlisted to the fullest extent in the process of sanctification⁸. . . . The sanctifying process is not only dependent upon the death and resurrection of Christ in its initiation; it is also dependent upon the death and resurrection of Christ in its continuance⁹.

And Waldron says,

Are we sanctified by faith alone? Or are works to be added to faith? The answer is that is not a matter of adding works to faith. It is a matter of faith working. We are sanctified by faith, but not merely by faith resting on God's promises, but also by faith working by God's directives.

Waldron again:

⁷Alexander Whyte. *An Exposition on the Shorter Catechism*. p. 123.

⁸John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Location 1,709.

⁹John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Location 1,715.

Sanctification is, however, not a matter only of dogged determination. Again and again Paul builds the imperative of sanctification on the indicative. Again and again he tells us to reckon upon the fact that we were joined savingly to Christ when we were converted. . . . If we are to make any real progress in holiness, we must get to the place where we can prosecute the work of sanctification on the basis of reckoning ourselves to have died with Christ.

This indicative/imperative connection appears all over Scripture. For instance, in Ephesians 4, Paul urges us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” It’s those whom the Lord called who are to walk worthy. Similarly, the Lord says “be ye holy, for I am holy” to a people he has sanctified for himself.

2.2.4 It’s substance:

Though our paragraph says the “whole body of sin is destroyed,” it’s clear that several lusts that belong to it remain. And if we’re not stirring them up, then they’ll be fading. There’s two sides to the lifelong process of progressive sanctification.

1. Negatively, sin is weakened and mortified

When, by the power of Christ’s death and resurrection, the “the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed,” we become able to mortify sin. Sin no longer has dominion; though there is remaining sin, there will no longer be reigning sin. Romans 6:12: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Alexander Whyte says “To die unto anything is to become indifferent to it, to shake off its power, to be superior to its attractions. A dead man hears not, sees not, tastes not, smells not, feels not; and a soul spiritually dead to sin would be in a world of sin dead to it all¹⁰.”

So the lusts are more and more weakened and put to death.

2. Positively, grace is quickened and strengthened

The flip side to this is that those united to Christ are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces. So it’s not merely that

¹⁰White, Shorter Catechism, p. 125.

we're dead to sin. We've been made alive to righteousness. This is just as important. Christ didn't just die. He died and was raised, and so *in him* we died to sin, and are raised to righteousness. This is what it means to be united to Christ. We identify with him in his death *and* his resurrection. When we're baptized we go under, but we also come back up.

2.2.5 It's necessity: 'without which no man shall see the Lord'

The Catholics, east and west, accuse us of easy-believism. We need to take the last bit here seriously. They think justification by faith alone is recipe for moral license. Let's don't prove them right. Our confession identifies holiness as something "without which no man shall see the Lord." This is biblical language; it's Hebrews 12:14. And let's don't confuse this with legalism. To mortify sin, and to quicken righteousness is obedience, not legalism. To love the Lord is to keep his commandments.

3 The distinctives of sanctification

3.1 Struggle with sin (§ 2)

This sanctification is throughout the whole man,⁷ yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part,⁸ whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.⁹

3.1.1 The roots of this struggle

So we find ourselves in this condition: we're now subjects of a new King. We're renewed, and the reign of sin is destroyed. But remnants of corruption from our old life remain. The scope of sanctification here is coextensive with the scope of our depravity. It's total, right? Since the corruption is in every part, the sanctification has to address every part. John Murray says,

The presence of sin in the believer involves conflict in his heart and life. If there is remaining, indwelling sin, there must be the conflict which Paul describes in Romans 7:14ff¹¹.

¹¹John Murray. *Redemption*. Location 1,658.

3.1.2 The Nature of this struggle

We belong to a new King. Every sin is a little treason. John Murray says, “All sin in the believer is the contradiction of God’s holiness.” This struggle is called a “war” by our confession. This war is necessarily continual and irreconcilable because the combatants in the war are contrary to one another in nature. It’s clear from the nature of the case that 1) we shouldn’t expect sanctification to be easy, and 2) we shouldn’t expect rest from it in this life.

3.1.3 The combatants in this struggle

The language of our confession is biblical. Galatians 5:17 says, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” These combatants aren’t going to give up. We’re called to endurance.

3.2 Progress in grace (¶ 3)

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail,¹⁰ yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome;¹¹ 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 hath prescribed to them.¹²

3.2.1 The difficulty of this progress

Revelation 13:7-10 is about the government, represented in the figure of a beast. But I think we can make an argument for endurance from the greater to the lesser here.

[The beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,

with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

If we're meant to maintain our holiness in the face of a beast who can and will take us captive, or slay us with the sword, how much more should we endure in the face of our flesh's relatively small temptations?

Hebrews 12:3 says,

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

It says here there may be a time in which corruption prevails. Our confession cites Romans 7:23, where Paul says,

I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

This isn't ease. This doesn't sound like "victorious life" preaching to me.

3.2.2 The certainty of this progress

But progress is certain. The paragraph says we're supplied continually by the Spirit. Though corruption is acknowledged, there's no hint that growth in holiness can be stopped.

The language of war, and overcoming puts me certain mind so that when I come to the word 'supply' I think of supply lines. In war you want to cut the enemy's supply lines so that they're unable to even make war. I don't imagine Spirit of Christ can be interrupted in this way. But we *can* interrupt the supply lines of the flesh. I think this is one thing fasting can do. I think we should be brutal in cutting out things that militate against our sanctification. Matthew 18:8-9

if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. ⁹ And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

This isn't hyperbolic. Your eyes, hands, and feet don't cause you to sin, but we ought to love holiness so much that if they did, we ought to be willing to sacrifice any earthly thing to prefer holiness.

3.2.3 The quality of this progress

So progress in holiness is war. There will be ups and downs. There will be a high cost, little comfort, and little rest. But we are to fear God and love holiness such that we reckon it worth the trouble to *press* for the heavenly life. If we love Him we'll find it worth the struggle to yield evangelical obedience to our Head and King.

Benjamin Keach,

Tho a Person may be never so filthy, and unclean before his *Union with Christ*, yet this *Union* doth not leave him filthy, and polluted; for as he hath the Righteousness of Christ imputed to him, to his Justification, and Remission of Sin, so he hath also receiv'd the Holy Spirit, creating in his Soul new Habits, and gracious Dispositions, bu which he is inabled, and influenc'd, to Dye unto Sin, and so to Live unto God¹².

¹²Renihan, *Baptist Symbolics, Volume 2*. location 6,246.