

CHAPTER 15

SANCTIFICATION

B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*; Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

Definition of sanctification

WSC 35, “Sanctification is a 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.”

Also WLC 75, WCF 13:1

Notice that in the Westminster standards, sanctification includes all divine increase in holiness, even prior to and including regeneration; cf. WCF 13:1, “further sanctified,” and WLC 75, “having seeds . . . put into their hearts.”

But normally theologians, along with the bulk of the standards, define sanctification as the process of increasing holiness after conversion.

Sanctification is distinguished from justification in three ways (WLC 77):

Justification	Sanctification
Imputes Christ’s righteousness	Infuses grace to exercise own righteousness
Sin is pardoned	Sin is subdued
Total, equal in all, complete	Partial, different in all, growing

Biblical terms for sanctification

שָׁדַךְ *qādaš*, Piel and Hiphil “set apart, consecrate, sanctify

Related to other words:

שָׁדָד *qōdēs*, “apartness, sacredness, holiness” (469x)

שָׁדָדָה *qādēs* / הַשָּׂדָדָה *qēdēsāh*, “temple prostitute, harlot (masc./fem.)”

מִיִּקְדָּשׁ *mīqdās*, “holy place, sanctuary” (74x)

קָדוֹשׁ *qādōš*, adj. “holy”

The primary meaning of this word is to set apart, separate; but it does not require a good moral purpose (cf. the term for temple prostitute, and the example in Isa 66:17). Normally this verb, however, is associated with sacred purposes, with a corresponding good moral flavor; e.g., Ezek 37:21-28.

The verb *qādāš* is applied to various subjects:

- Things: —Sabbath day, Gen 2:3
 —Houses and fields, Lev 27:14, 16
 —Firstling beasts, Lev 27:26
 —Tabernacle and furniture, Lev 8:10-11
- People: —Firstborn, Exod 13:2
 —Priests, Exod 28:41
 —Nation Israel, Exod 19:14
 —Prophet Jeremiah, Jer 1:5
 —God himself, Ezek 38:23 (declarative and revelatory)

ἁγιάζω *hagiazō*, “make holy, consecrate, sanctify, set apart” (29x)

Related to other words:

ἅγιος *hagios*, adj. “holy, sacred, dedicated” (164x)

ἅγια *hagia*, “sanctuary” (11x)

ἅγιος *hagios*, “saint, Holy One” (65x)

ἁγιότης *hagiotēs*, “holiness” (1x)

ἁγιοςσύνη *hagiosune*, “holiness” (3x)

ἁγιασμός *hagiasmos*, “holiness, consecration, sanctification” (10x)

This noun seems to emphasize a condition that results from a practice; e.g., Rom 6:19, 22; 1 Thess 4:3-7.

As with *qādaš*, so *hagiazō* refers to things and to people:

- Things: —Gold on temple, Matt 23:17
 —Sacrifice, Matt 23:19
 —Food, 1 Tim 4:5
- People: —The church, Eph 5:26
 —Children, 1 Cor 7:14
 —Christians, 1 Thess 5:23
 —God himself, Matt 6:9; 1 Pet 3:15

Conclusion regarding biblical usage.—The term “sanctify” is used in the Bible in a general sense, “to set apart for some (usually sacred) purpose,” and in a theological sense to describe personal growth in holiness. This growth is seen in four stages:

- 1) Preparation to conversion—1 Cor 7:14; 1 Pet 1:2
- 2) Conversion and justification—Heb 13:12
- 3) Growth in grace during Christian life—1 Thess 5:23 (this is the most common theological usage)
- 4) Final perfection—Eph 5:25-27

Sanctification in the Christian

Meaning (3) above is the normal understanding given to the term *sanctification* in theological literature.

Sanctification is a continuous process, beginning at conversion and continuing throughout the Christian life. As closely linked to repentance and faith, it includes two aspects:

- 1) Sanctification from sin: Rom 6:5-6, 14; 8:13; Gal 5:24
- 2) Sanctification to God: 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 3:16-19; 4:14-15; Col 1:11

The work of sanctification is a work of grace, carried out by all three persons of the Trinity:

Father—John 17:17, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Son—Eph 5:25-26, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.”

Holy Spirit—2 Cor 3:18, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Extent of sanctification

Sanctification affects every part of man (1 Thess 5:23), but is never complete in this life. WCF 13:2, WLC 78

Eccl. 7:20, “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

Phil 3:12, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

We note that while Paul strove for perfection, he did not attain it in this life.

Jas 3:2, “We all stumble in many ways.”

1 John 1:8-10, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

Main passage used to support sinless perfection in this life:

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 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.” (1 John 3:7-9, KJV)

Need to compare with other passages and to recognize John’s writing style

For the testimonies of failure in this regard by exponents of sinless perfection, see Warfield *Perfectionism* 216-17.

Paul's own testimony in Rom 7:14-25 must be taken as the testimony of a spiritual Christian; cf. vv. 22, 25b (*contra* 8:7), and the present tenses starting at v. 14. For an excellent discussion, see Cranfield *Romans (ICC)* 1:355-70.

Since sanctification is incomplete in this life, and since the Christian is responsible to progress in sanctification, effort is required on the part of the Christian. As a result, the Christian life is described in Scripture as a kind of warfare (WCF 13:2-3).

Means of Sanctification

The weapons of this spiritual warfare are the various means of grace, used by the Holy Spirit—Gal 3:2-3; 5:16-25; Eph 6:10-18.

The Westminster standards name three means of grace (WLC 154, WSC 88):

1) The Word of God

The Word of God gives us the laws of God, by which we are to live; it provides many examples of those who lived faithfully to God, and of those who did not; and it provides us with the good doctrines of the gospel, that enable us, by the Holy Spirit, to be sanctified more and more.

—Enables us to examine our hearts—2 Cor 3:18; Heb 4:12-13; Jas 1:23-24

—Cleanses us—John 15:3; Eph 5:26

—Shows us Christ—2 Cor 3:18

Note on the 10 Commandments. The Commandments' meaning and application are studied especially in Theology 5 (Apologetics and Ethics). The Word of God, giving us God's commands, is the only way we can know what we ought to do.

WLC 95, "Of what use is the moral law to all men? A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it,

and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.”

WLC 97, “What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate? A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

Compare the “three uses of the law” (*usus legis*) in Reformed theology (expounded by Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2:7-8):

1. It restrains the world from sin
2. It shows us our sin and Christ’s righteousness, and drives us to Christ
3. It guides us in our Christian lives

2) Prayer

—Grace for ourselves—Luke 18:13-14; 22:40; Rom 8:26; Jude 20

—Grace for others—2 Cor 1:11; Eph 1:16-19; 3:14-16; 5:18-19

Cf. WLC 178-185, and on the Lord’s Prayer, #186-196

Excellent portion of Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, published separately as *Calvin on Prayer*. Sections in *Institutes*, Book 3, Ch. 22:

1. The Nature and Value of Prayer (1-3)
2. The Rules of Right Prayer (4-16)
3. The Intercession of Christ (17-20)
4. Rejection of Erroneous Doctrines of the Intercession of Saints (21-27)
5. Kinds of Prayer: Private and Public (28-30)
6. The Use of Singing, and of the Spoken Language (31-33)
7. The Lord’s Prayer as Our Great Example (34-49)
 - a. Exposition of the First Three Petitions (34-42)
 - b. Exposition of the Last Three Petitions (43-49)
8. Special Times of Prayer and Undiscouraged Perseverance in It (50-52)

3) The sacraments

—E.g., 1 Cor 11:28 (see under Ecclesiology)

—For baptism, see WLC 167

—For the Lord's Supper, see WLC 170-175

While providence is not named in the Westminster standards as a means of grace (since it happens to all, and is not voluntary), some Reformed writers include it—e.g., Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* 665-66. Cf. Heb 12:10.

Fruits of sanctification

WSC 36 lists the benefits of sanctification and the other results of conversion as follows:

- 1) Assurance of God's love
- 2) Peace of conscience
- 3) Joy in the Holy Ghost
- 4) Increase of grace
- 5) Perseverance therein to the end

These benefits, added to the prospect of eternal rewards, make the struggles of Christian sanctification abundantly worthwhile.

Note that the Confession does not mention special gifts of the Spirit as fruits of sanctification; their abundance in the “non-spiritual” church at Corinth would bear this out. See concerning the gift of tongues, Phil Roberts, *The Gift of Tongues* (IBRI, 1991); also see the entire issue of the *WRS Journal* 14:2 (Aug 2007), *Spiritual Gifts*.