

From Your Pastor

Study of the Shorter Catechism: Sanctification

Question 32: What is Sanctification? Answer: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,(1) whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,(2) and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.(3)

(1)2 Thess. 2:13 (2)Eph. 4:23,24 (3)Rom. 6:4,6; Rom. 8:1

Scripture Memory: *"...Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4)*

An Explanation: Man was created by our good God as upright, holy, and righteous. But man rebelled against our kind king (Ecc. 7:29). Although the fall did not completely destroy the image of God in man, it did great damage of deeply tainting man with sin. In the fall, man lost his original righteousness and communion with God, became spiritually dead in sin, and was defiled in all parts and faculties of soul and body (Gen. 2:17; 3:6-8; Gen. 6:1; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1; see WCF, 6.2). What was holy about man became corrupt, what was righteous became sinful and rebellious, and what was enlightened and illumined by God's truth became darkened (Eph. 4:19-24). We are not our former selves; we have been plunged into an estate of sin and misery. Fallen mankind can sing with sadness the popular song: *"Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away, now it looks as though they're here to stay...I'm not half the man I used to be, there's a shadow hanging over me..."*

"...A work of God's free grace..." But God in His steadfast love and kindness has not left us in an estate of sin and misery (see WSC, Q&A 19-21). He has provided our Lord Jesus as a Savior from the guilt and power of sin. In Christ, we are sanctified and restored (1 Cor. 1:30). Sanctification is a work of the Spirit of God in our union with Christ where the damage done by sin to the image of God is renewed in us.

"...We are renewed in the whole man after the image of God..." When thinking of sanctification, we should be reminded that Christ is the true image of God (Heb. 1:1-2; Col. 1:15). Christ Jesus is what man was created to be and how man was created to live as obedient son to a loving Heavenly Father. Jesus is the ideal son of the perfect Father. Adam as son rebelled ungratefully against his Father, Israel as son rebelled against his Father, we as sons have rebelled against our Father. But Jesus has perfectly lived, died, been raised and exalted as the ideal son and perfect man made in God's image, who is a willing and able Savior and Sanctifier of sinners (Heb. 2:10-18). Man was created for the worship, service and love of God. Christ Jesus did that with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength *for us!* (cf. Matt. 22:37-40). **By looking to Him, we are transformed** (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 12:2a).

"...Enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness..." In Christ, believers are taught to cooperate with this new nature that has been implanted into us by the precious and powerful Holy Spirit of God, by putting off the old tarnished self, the contaminated self, the poisoned self, the sinful self, and to be renewed by putting on the new self given to us in Christ Jesus! (Eph. 4:22-24). When we are united to Christ in our union with Him His Spirit not only imputes His perfect righteousness to us, but we begin to be renewed in the likeness of Christ. **Conformity to Christ for the glory of God is the ultimate reason for our salvation** (See Romans 8:29a; cf. Eph. 1:4). Conformity to Christ or holiness is not optional for the Christian. Without holiness, or Christ-likeness, no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14b). Let me be clear: **conformity to Christ is holiness**. Truly holy people look and act like Jesus to a certain degree. Holiness or being conformed to Christ's likeness has two important aspects: mortification and vivification. Mortification is a dying to our old way of doing things through the flesh. Vivification is living a new life in obedience to God. Believers can only mortify flesh and live by the Spirit knowing that in reality they have died and been raised with Christ (see Rom. 6:4-14). The Christian believer is in a constant warfare to do this by God's grace (Gal. 5:16-25). In justification, we are the passive recipients of God's act of grace upon our lives. In sanctification, we are the active participants of God's work of grace in our lives (Phil. 2:12-13).

A Prayer: Father, sanctify me through the blood of Jesus Christ, cleansing my heart this day, and fill me with your Spirit that I may do intense and intentional warfare against my flesh. May I keep my eyes on Jesus, and be conformed to Him more today!

In Christ's love,
Pastor Biggs

"...Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

- Luke 10:20