

Week Fifteen (Last Week was a special supplement on CG/WMO) February 9, 2022: Of Justification, Adoption, Sanctification

Chapter 11: Justification, The heart of the Reformation.

WCF 11:1: *Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth:(a) not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them,(b) they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.(c)*

(a)Rom. 8:30; Rom. 3:24. (b)Rom. 4:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:19,21; Rom. 3:22, 24-25, 27-28; Tit. 3:5,7; Eph. 1:7; Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30, 31; Rom. 5:17-19. (c)Acts 10:43; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9; Acts 13:38-39; Eph. 2:7-8.

Those who have been effectually called naturally are justified. Not by infusion, as the Catholic Church has in mind, which is ongoing but not final and always in danger of being removed. Infusion creates dependence on men rather than the God-man. Justification is not organic filling, but legal pardon. It is based on being declared righteous, not getting a righteousness drip: "Justification means to declare righteous or to *acquit*, and is regularly contrasted with *to condemn* ... justification is not a subjective change, but a judicial act."²³² The language of Scripture for justification is that of judicial declaration, not personal renovation. Watson explains, the word is "borrowed from law-courts, wherein a person arraigned is pronounced righteous, and is openly absolved. God in justifying a person, pronounces him to be righteous, and looks upon him as if he had not sinned."²³³ Justification is based not on something God does in us, but what God did for us in Jesus and credited (imputed) to us (our moral account). VanDixhoorn explains, "Our righteousness is not some part of us. Our righteousness is Jesus."²³⁴ Also, faith itself is not imputed; faith is the means of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Our faith is not the *basis* of our justification, but the instrument of receiving *Christ's righteousness* as the basis of our salvation.²³⁵ God does not look at us, but Christ, for our sin to be appeased: "So we are justified justly, on the basis of justice done."²³⁶ Faith itself is a gift of God. People in our day should hesitate of boasting about their "strong faith" and rather seek to be justified before God by His mighty Savior. God requires absolute perfection; only Jesus meets this

²³² Clark, *WPB*, 52. Dickson, 69: "... if inherent righteousness did justify us, then good works would justify us; but the Scripture denies that."

²³³ Watson, 227.

²³⁴ VanDixhoorn, 161.

²³⁵ Horatius Bonar shares how Brentius expresses his gratitude to Luther and Melancthon for explaining how faith has no merit in itself, reiterating in his letters back to them: "Justification comes to us neither *on account of* our faith, but solely on account of Christ; and yet it comes *through* (by means of) faith ... We do not merit, we only *obtain* justification." Translated by Horatius Bonar in *God's Way of Holiness*, 32. Dickson, 70: "... faith is that by which we receive righteousness (Acts 26:18). If it be that by which we receive righteousness, it cannot be righteousness itself; because that which is received is far different, and another thing, from that whereby we receive it."

²³⁶ Packer, 165.

requirement on our behalf. No man or church can do it for us. The Roman Catholic Church persecuted and murdered Protestants for this doctrine. Everything hung on it. Martin Luther, the German monk used by God to reform the church in the 1500s, said that justification is “the article by which the church stands or falls.”²³⁷ As Thomas Watson writes, “Justification is the very hinge and pillar of Christianity. An error about justification is dangerous, like a defect in a foundation.”²³⁸ Luther’s soul was freed with Habakkuk 2:4: “The just shall live by faith”, which is quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. The Reformation’s motto is “salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone” (three of the “five solas”). Roman Catholics merge justification and sanctification, but the Reformers rightly distinguish them: “The Romish doctors and creeds ... mix up the judicial and the moral, the sinner’s standing and the sinner’s character, the work for us and the work in us ...”²³⁹

WCF 11:2: *Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; (d) yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. (e)*
(d)John 1:12; Rom. 3:28; Rom. 5:1. (e)James 2:17, 22, 26; Gal. 5:6.

Faith is receiving and resting on Jesus; that is, Christ is the object of our faith. Faith is belief. It is trust. It is assenting to the truths of the Gospel for oneself.²⁴⁰ It is by faith only that we receive Christ’s righteousness and thus are justified. We do not receive and rest on anything or anyone else. Faith is not a work, and we are not saved by works. Faith is the instrument of receiving. “Rom. v I. it lays hold on Christ’s merits.”²⁴¹ However, true faith always is accompanied by works. If there is the root of faith, there will be the fruit of works as its evidence. We are not saved to sin. We are saved to serve. R.C. Sproul writes, “We are justified not by a profession of faith, but by a possession of faith”²⁴²; true possession of faith will naturally possess good works within it. The Roman Catholics often teach that “justification by grace through faith alone” will lead to sinful living. Not for those truly saved. The Reformers answered, “Faith alone saves, but the faith which saves is never alone.”²⁴³ Here it may be helpful to explain the difference between Paul saying Abraham was justified by faith and not by works while James says Abraham was justified by his works, and not by faith alone. These two Scriptures will be seen to not be in contradiction when the context of each

²³⁷ Spear, 61. “What followed its loss? Darkness! What followed its recovery? Light! The preaching of this primitive truth by Luther shook a continent and started and shaped an era.” Green, 85.

²³⁸ Watson, 226.

²³⁹ Bonar, 210. Earlier, he points out that “The sinner’s *legal* position must be set to right before his *moral* position can be touched. Condition is one thing, character is another” (52); and later he states, “The harp must be tuned before it can play, and it would be folly to speak of *playing it into tune*. So the person must be justified before one good work can be done” (208).

²⁴⁰ More on what faith is when we discuss chapter 14, “Of Saving Faith”, next week.

²⁴¹ Watson, 227.

²⁴² Sproul, vol. 2, 53-57.

²⁴³ Spear, 63. Dickson, 71: “Because faith worketh by love (*Gal. 5:6*), that is, by showing forth the works of love in us, towards God and our neighbor.” Watson clarifies: “Holiness indeed is not the cause of our justification, but it is the attendant; as the heat in the sun is not the cause of its light, but it is the attendant.” Watson, 229. Later he writes, good works are not an usher to go before justification, but a handmaid to follow it.” Ibid, 230.

argument and their Scripture proofs are studied. In Romans 4:1-5:1 (specifically, vs. 3), Paul points to Abraham's believing God's promise in Gen. 15:6 to give Him a nation and many seed (without any visible proof at the time) to prove his argument that we are only justified before God by faith. James is not dealing with the same issue, and so he is not dealing with the same aspect of the word for justification. James is not talking about how one is justified before God, but how one justifies before the world that he truly has real justifying faith. Here, he uses a version of the same Greek word (*δικαίωω*) as Paul does for "justification" (to be approved, render to be righteous), but in its other sense, "vindication" (to give proof, exhibit as righteous). So in James 2:20-24, while he adds Gen. 15:6 in the end of his argument, he focuses on Abraham's faith being tested and proved by his obedience in Genesis 22:1-19 by offering up Isaac on the altar (specifically, vs. 9).²⁴⁴ Sproul rightly notes, "We do not work to become justified, but once we are justified, our works start."²⁴⁵ Ephesians 2:10 follows vs. 8-9!

WCF 11:3: *Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. (f) Yet, inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them; (g) and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; (h) and both freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace; (i) that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God, might be glorified in the justification of sinners. (k)*

(f) Rom. 5:8-10, 19; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 10:10, 14; Dan. 9:24, 26; Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12. (g) Rom. 8:32. (h) 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 3:17; Eph. 5:2; (i) Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; (k) Rom. 3:26; Eph. 2:7.

Christ's active and passive obedience fully satisfied God's divine justice and fully paid for the wages of our sin. We have no debt left to pay. It is an act of God's absolute sovereign, free grace. The atonement was an act of God's love, not our means of earning love (John 3:16). We played no part, and we paid no price.²⁴⁶ God glorifies Himself in justice and grace exhibited in saving sinners. God cannot be said to be unjust. And He cannot be said to be unloving. Still, it is important to remember that "justification is indeed free to man but not to God or Christ."²⁴⁷

11:4: *God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, (l) and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: (m) nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them. (n)*

(l) Gal. 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:2, 19-20; Rom. 8:30. (m) Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Rom. 4:25. (n) Col. 1:21-22; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:3-7.

While we are eternally loved and elected, our justification only happens in time: first, Jesus had to die to accomplish it. Second, it had to be applied to us by the Holy Spirit. Third, we had to exist and believe for it to be applied to us. While we are *immortal*, we are not *eternal*. Here most specifically

²⁴⁴ Sproul, vol. 2, 55. Watson also addresses the distinction between James and Abraham: "Works declare us to be righteous before men, but they do not make us righteous before God. Works are evidences of our justification, not causes." Watson, 230.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 88.

²⁴⁶ Dickson, 72: "Because human satisfactions, being finite, can never satisfy in part or in whole the infinite justice of God for the punishment of sin (*Job* 35:6)." See previous discussion of this in class booklet on WCF 8.

²⁴⁷ Green, 85. To see this powerfully prefigured, remember the typology of Abraham (the sacrificing Father-figure) offering up Isaac (the willing Son-figure sacrifice) in Genesis 22.

the Confession teaches against “Eternal Justification”. Justification is something that happens to us in time. We are eternally elect because God has eternally set His affection on us and is not bound by time. But justification has to be accomplished and applied in time.²⁴⁸ Bonar says, “... the personal transference takes place *upon our believing, not before* ; and we might as well speak of eternal conversion and eternal faith as of eternal justification.”²⁴⁹ Similarly, Watson writes: “We could never have been condemned, if we were justified from eternity ... Acts iii.19 ... their sins were unconcealed, and their persons unjustified, till they did repent. Though God does not justify us for our repentance, yet not without it. The Antinomians erroneously hold, that we are justified from eternity. This doctrine is a key which opens the door to all licentiousness; for what sins do they care not to commit, so long as they are *ab æterno* justified whether they repent or not?”²⁵⁰

WCF 11:5: *God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified:(o) and, although they can never fall from the state of justification;(p) yet they may, by their sins, fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.(q)*
(o)Matt. 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; 1 John 2:1-2. (p)Luke 22:32; John 10:28; Heb. 10:14. (q) Ps. 89:31-33; Ps. 51:7-12; Ps. 32:5; Matt. 26:75; 1 Cor. 11:30, 32; Luke 1:20.

Once justified, always justified.²⁵¹ God always forgives because we *have been* forgiven. One should be leery of teaching that some kind of “future justification” is still remaining.²⁵² But like any good Father, He will discipline us (Heb. 12:5-11). “The justified are never afterwards condemned, though they may be chastised ... the justified may fall under the Father's displeasure ...”²⁵³ God wants true repentance and change in us when we fall. Do not take your justification for granted. You do not have a pushover for a Father. He will humble you. Good children who appreciate their Father will act like it. When they don’t, they will suffer loss, and our fellowship with God and His people in this life is disturbed. Discipline is a sign God never gives up on us.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁸ Still, Green's distinction is worth meditation: “The elect are all now virtually justified and will in the course of time be actually justified. Virtual justification is eternal; actual justification is temporal. The elect are objectively justified as a class, they are subjectively justified as individuals, as they one by one appropriate Christ by faith.” 86. Dickson, 73: thus, those who “maintain that the elect are justified from eternity” do “err”.

²⁴⁹ Bonar, 204. He quotes Turretine in a footnote, “God’s justifying decree is one thing, and our actual justification is another.” VanDixhoorn states, “Justification is determined in eternity, but it is vitally important to see that the doctrine assumes an event in history”, 167.

²⁵⁰ Watson, 228.

²⁵¹ “Justification though temporal is not temporary.” Green, 86.

²⁵² Such as taught by Richard Gaffin: see *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr.’s Doctrine of Justification* by Stephen M. Cunha, *The Current Justification Controversy* by O. Palmer Robertson, and *A Companion to the Current Justification Controversy* by John Robbins (all published by The Trinity Foundation). Also, in his chapter on the *Westminster Confession* and eschatology, J.V. Fesko writes, “The idea of a second or final justification was common among Roman Catholic and neonomian theologians and consequently of target for Reformation anti-Roman polemics. Hence the language of a second (or final) justification does not appear in the Westminster Standards or in any other major confession.” (Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards*, 383).

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ “The Father never writes us off.”, Sproul, vol. 2, 73. Remember Hebrews 12 and Proverbs 3.

WCF 11:6: *The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.* (r)
(r)Gal. 3:9, 13-14; Rom. 4:22-24; Heb. 13:8.

Again, saints in the OT and NT Church are all justified only by faith in the Messiah.

Some further thoughts by Thomas Watson on Justification:

“The ground of our justification is Christ’s satisfaction made to his Father. If it be asked, how can it stand with God’s justice and holiness to pronounce us innocent when we are guilty? the answer is, that Christ having made satisfaction for our fault, God may, in equity and justice, pronounce us righteous. It is a just thing for a creditor to discharge a debtor of the debt, when a satisfaction is made by the surety” (227). “As [Christ] was man, he suffered, as God he satisfied” (227). Jesus is “‘Jer. xxiii 6. The LORD Our Righteousness.’ I Cor i 30. This righteousness of Christ, which justifies us, is a better righteousness than the angels’; for theirs is the righteousness of creatures, this is of God” (227). “All the persons in the blessed Trinity have a hand in the justification of a sinner ... God the Father justifies, as he pronounces us righteous [Rom. vii 33]; God the Son justifies, as he imputes his righteousness to us [Acts xiii 39]; and God the Holy Ghost justifies, as he clears up our justification, and seals us up to the day of redemption [I Cor vi II]” (227-228). “The end is (I.) That God may inherit praise ... Eph i 6 ... That the justified person may inherit glory ... Rom viii 30 ... Justification is crowned with glorification” (228). “If they are justified they are elected; and they can no more fall from their justification than from their election. If they are justified they have union with Christ; and can a member of Christ be broken off? If one justified person may fall away from Christ, all man; and so Christ would be a head without a body” (229). “Now that the judge himself should find out a way to justify us, and the creditor himself contrive a way to have the debt paid, and not distress the debtor, should fill us with wonder and love” (230). “It is comfort in the case of failings ... though men censure and condemn the godly, yet God has justified them, and as he has now justified them, so at the day of judgment he will openly justify them ... God having publicly justified his saints, he will never condemn them ...” (231).

Chapter 12: Adoption: *All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption:(a) by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,(b) have His name put upon them,(c) receive the spirit of adoption,(d) have access to the throne of grace with boldness,(e) are enabled to cry, Abba, Father;(f) are pitied,(g) protected,(h) provided for;(i) and chastened by Him as by a Father;(k) yet never cast off,(l) but sealed to the day of redemption,(m) and inherit the promises,(n) as heirs of everlasting salvation.(o)*

(a)Eph. 1:5. (b)Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:17; John 1:12. (c)Jer. 14:9; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12. (d)Rom. 8:15. (e)Eph. 3:12; Rom. 5:2. (f)Gal. 4:6. (g)Ps. 103:13. (h)Prov. 14:26. (i)Matt. 6:30, 32; 1 Pet. 5:7. (k)Heb 12:6. (l)Lam. 3:31. (m)Eph. 4:30. (n)Heb. 6:12. (o)1 Pet. 1:3, 4; Heb. 1:14.

Adoption implies sonship, which also was lost in the fall. *Justification* secures *citizenship* in the *Kingdom*. *Adoption* secures *family* in God’s *house*. Both are legal declarations (acts). Once declared righteous, you are called family. You may approach Him like a son and call Him “Daddy” (*Abba*, although notice this word is always followed with the respectful “Father” in Scripture). There is intimate fellowship, protection, and direction with “Our Father”. As a son, you have a right to the inheritance Jesus gives you (John 1:11-12; Rev. 21:7). Sproul’s emphasis of our benefit in adoption is helpful: “ ... God takes home a child who was not his natural-born child, but is now his

supernaturally born child ...”²⁵⁵ While this chapter is short, it is lovely, and the “first creed to treat adoption as a distinct subject”.²⁵⁶ As sons, God “vouchsafeth” for us; He identifies Himself with us as His own for whom He has responsibility. Adoption implies freedom from slavery. Not only pardon from punishment, but acceptance and restoration. We are not estranged. Talk to your Father regularly. Adoption also implies our mutual relationship to one another as family, “received into the number.”²⁵⁷ We have no universal Fatherhood or brotherhood with the world, but only an adoptive Father and adopted family in Christ: “The Bible speaks of a universal neighborhood, not a universal brotherhood. That is, every person is my neighbor, but only fellow Christians are the adopted children of God.”²⁵⁸ He is the universal Creator, but only “our Father”.²⁵⁹ While Watson recognizes we are sonship of God by “creation”, yet “This is no privilege; for men may have God for their Father by creation, and yet have the devil for their father;” for, “Our sonship [as Christians] is by adoption,” and “He ennobles us with his name” and “a new nature.”²⁶⁰ Further, he adds, “Faith interests us in the privilege of adoption ... Gal iii 26 ... An unbeliever may call God judge, but not father.”²⁶¹ God’s Fatherly discipline is loving, and “never vengeful or vindictive”.²⁶²

Some further thoughts on adoption by Thomas Watson:

“Our sonship differs from Christ’s. He was the Son of God by eternal generation, a son before time; but our sonship is ... By creation” and “adoption” (232). It is both to “*females as well as males 2 Cor vi I8*” (232). “It is taking a stranger into the relation of a son and heir ...” (232). “Adoption is a

²⁵⁵ Sproul, vol. 2, 74.

²⁵⁶ Ward, 92. VanDixhoorn (172) notes three reasons for the brevity of the chapter: 1) “It was not treated as an independent topic at the Reformation ...”; 2) “... the assembly could offer a crisp statement on the doctrine of adoption because it could state the truth without correction of error”; and 3) “... some aspects of the experience of God’s children are related in chapter 18 on assurance.” Green, 88: “Of the great creeds of Christendom, not one contains a formal article on adoption except the Westminster Standards. Adoption has a place in the Confession of Faith and in both Catechisms.” Green here also gives a lovely suggestion for a thematic sermon on adoption that is worth our meditation:

1. Ephesians 1:5: The End of Foreordination Is Adoption.
2. Galatians 4:4-5: The End of Incarnation and Redemption Is Adoption.
3. Romans 8:23: The Object of Christian Hope is Adoption.
4. Romans 8:15: The Filial Spirit Is the Evidence of Adoption.
5. Galatians 4:7: Inheritance Is the Privilege of Adoption (of the Adopted).

²⁵⁷ “... if the angels of God who stand before his throne are sent as servants of people here on earth, how much more ought we to serve the same family ourselves!” Van Dixhoorn, 174-175.

²⁵⁸ Sproul, vol. 2, 70.

²⁵⁹ “... if a man becomes a child of God by adoption, he could not have been a child of God by nature.” Clark, *WPB*, 55.

²⁶⁰ Watson, 232, 233.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 234. He also writes, “See the sad condition of such as live and die in unbelief. They are not the sons of God ... No faith, no sonship ... Unbelievers are ‘dead in trespasses.’ Eph ii I. God has no dead children; and not being children, they have no right to inherit.” *Ibid*, 236.

²⁶² VanDixhoorn, 174.

state of freedom; a slave being adopted is made a free man ... Gal iv 7” (233). “God adopts all his sons to an inheritance ... Luke xii 32 ... Adoption ends in coronation” (234). “Our adoption was purchased at a dear rate; for when God was about to make us sons and heirs, he could not seal the deed but by the blood of his own Son” (235). “David thought it no small honour that he should be a king's son-in-law. I Sam. xviii 18. But what honour to be the sons of the high God!” (235). “The first sign of adoption is obedience. A son obeys his father” (236).” “True obedience looks at God in all things. ‘That Christ may be magnified.’ Phil i 20. Though a child of God shoots short, yet he takes a right aim” (237). “True child-like obedience must be uniform. A child of God makes conscience of one command as well as another ... ‘When I have respect unto all thy commandments.’ Psalm cxix 6. To obey God in some things of religion and not in others, shows an unsound heart ...” (237). “True childlike obedience is constant. ‘Blessed is he that doth righteousness at all times.’ Psalm cvi 3” (238). “The second sign of adoption is to love to be in our Father's presence. The child who loves his father is never so well as when he is near him” (238). “The third sign of adoption is to have the guidance of God's Spirit ... Rom viii 14” (238). “The Spirit's guidance is agreeable to the Word; enthusiasts leave the Word ... John xvii 17 ... John xvi 13 ... The Word's teaching and the Spirit's leading agree together ... The fourth sign is, that if we are adopted we have an entire love to all God's children. ‘Love the brotherhood.’ I Pet ii 17” (239). “Extol and magnify God's mercy, who has adopted you into his family; who, of slaves, has made you sons; of heirs of hell, heirs of the promise” (240). “Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise; he was a son by creation, but here is a further sonship by adoption” (240).²⁶³

Chapter 13: Sanctification: “Sanctification is the Christianizing of the Christian.”²⁶⁴ J.I. Packer writes: “... theology is for doxology and devotion—that is, the praise of God and the practice of godliness.”²⁶⁵ “God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes.”²⁶⁶

WCF 13:1: *They who are 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, (a) by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: (b) the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, (c) and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; (d) and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, (e) to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. (f)*

(a) 1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 20:32; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5-6. (b) John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 2 Thess. 2:13. (c) Rom. 6:6, 14. (d) Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13. (e) Col. 1:11; Eph. 3:16-19. (f) 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14.

Definitive Sanctification: “a new heart/spirit”, as the “dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed.” You are washed and made holy. Note that “justification is not the beginning of sanctification. Sanctification begins in effectual calling ... [and] regeneration ... is the beginning of sanctification.”²⁶⁷ But you are also “further sanctified”, thus it is not “an act” but “a work” (see the

²⁶³ This quote also is relevant to the earlier discussion on Adam as the earthy type of the heavenly Christ and never able to give the same reward to his posterity as can and did Christ, as discussed in WCF chapter seven on denying Adam could have earned eternal life.

²⁶⁴ Green, 91.

²⁶⁵ Packer, xii.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 3.

²⁶⁷ Green, 91-92.

catechisms and this distinction): *Progressive sanctification*.²⁶⁸ You grow and improve spiritually in subjecting your body and soul to obey the Spirit of Christ in you (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Cor. 10:5). J.I. Packer summarizes the reality of both definitive and progressive sanctification and how they relate: “Sanctification is an ongoing transformation within a maintained consecration, and it engenders real righteousness within the frame of relational holiness ... Regeneration is birth; sanctification is growth.”²⁶⁹ If you are not holy (evidenced by practicing righteousness), you should not expect “to see the Lord”. God told Abraham to be holy (four times also in Leviticus, as quoted in 1 Pet. 1:15-16). Jesus told us to be perfect like our Father. Sanctification is God’s purpose in salvation: God makes us good.²⁷⁰ Sanctification is being set apart from the wicked, vile world to live a separate life from its worldview and lifestyle. God wants us to act holy because He made us holy and He is perfectly holy. Like Father, like sons.

WCF 13:2: *This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man;(g) yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part:(h) whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.(i)* (g)1 Thess. 5:23. (h)1 John 1:10; Rom. 7:18,23; Phil. 3:12. (i)Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:11.

The body is still corrupt, so the process of its sanctification continues until heaven (WLC 78).²⁷¹ We will never act perfectly until we are fully glorified (against perfectionism). You must see yourself as in a “continual and irreconcilable war” with sin. Do not act like a civilian, but a soldier. “Nobody gets sanctified with five minutes of Bible reading a day. The Word has to be our meat and drink if we want to grow in grace ... Growth in the Christian life is labor-intensive.”²⁷² Sin must not dominate you: “ ... there is a difference between the remnant of sin and the reign of sin ... Sanctification is not a matter of ‘letting go and letting God’ but it is a matter of engaging in the good fight of faith.”²⁷³ Sanctification is “a dying” as well as “a living”.²⁷⁴ It is mortification (killing) of the old selves just as much as it is vivification (living) our saved selves. You play a part (cooperate) with the Holy Spirit in your growth in holiness. You rely on the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, but you enjoy health and strength when you move your legs. The closer you walk with God, the stronger your spiritual life will be. The Holy Spirit releases His power the moment you take a step of faith. Obedience unlocks God’s power. Effort had nothing to do with your salvation, but effort has much to do with your sanctification: 1 Pt. 1:22. You are freed from sins’ guilt (justification), AND its grip.

²⁶⁸ See John Murray’s “Definitive Sanctification” and “Progressive Sanctification” in his *Collected Works*, vol. 2. The concept is Biblical and expressed by John Owen: “The Holy Spirit so worketh *in us* that he worketh *by us*, and what he doth in us is done by us.” *The Holy Spirit*, 204. See also that both definitive and progressive sanctification are essentially taught in WSC 35.

²⁶⁹ Packer 169-170.

²⁷⁰ Clark, *WPB*, 57. “He died to make us good.”

²⁷¹ “ ... God’s sanctifying work is ... not defective, but it is incomplete.” VanDixhoorn, 182.

²⁷² Sproul, vol. 2, 83.

²⁷³ Ward, 96.

²⁷⁴ Green, 91.

WCF 13:3: *In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; (k) yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; (l) and so, the saints grow in grace, (m) perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (n)*
 (k)Rom 7:23. (l)Rom. 6:14; 1 John 5:4; Eph. 4:15-16. (m)2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:18. (n)2 Cor. 7:1.

You will get better and better in all areas of your life, reflecting your eternal life: “Sanctification like depravity is ‘total’ *in extent*, though partial in degree ... it effects every part of man’s being, soul and body, and influences in some measure his whole life.”²⁷⁵ Be motivated to continue to grow in holiness by growing in grace, and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), for we must walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). You should endeavor after and expect to see a better you (in Christ) all the time. Remember the source is the Spirit (it is His work) and He works with the Word (John 17:17) and your attention and obedience to applying it (see also Phil. 2:12-13): “God furthers his faithful plan by taking, washing and feeding his newborns ...”²⁷⁶ J.I. Packer writes, “sanctification is ... God-dependent effort ... Christ’s love, humility, and patience under pressure are to be consciously imitated ...”²⁷⁷ Remember our church’s previous “personality statement” in our old logo: “Saved by the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit.” Don’t forget to ask the Father to give you more of the work of the Holy Spirit for He will because it is His will (Luke 11:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3)! R.C. Sproul’s words are appropriate to close with: “To be sanctified is to have a heart that wants to obey Christ.”²⁷⁸

Following are two diagrams to make a quick reference comparison and contrast of justification and sanctification (the first comparing Q&As from the WLC and WSC; the second the specific question 77 of the WLC doing just that):

WLC: 70 [SC 33] What is Justification?	WLC 75 [WSC35] What is Sanctification?
“An act”: instantaneous/complete/final	“A work”, note: “they... <u>chosen to be holy</u> ” “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” <i>Definitive</i> in this sense [act/done]:
“He pardoneth all their sins” [position made right before and by God]	“through the powerful <u>operation</u> of his Spirit <u>applying</u> the death and resurrection of Christ unto them” <i>Progressive</i> in this sense, and the mainly described aspect is of what follows in the answer [<i>development of nature in and with God</i>]

²⁷⁵ Green, 91.

²⁷⁶ VanDixhoorn, 178. He adds, however, that “Christians who do not know their Bibles remain immature and childish. Churches that do not teach the truth of God’s Word will never rise above the nursery, even if they do separate the adults from the children in their services of worship.”, 179.

²⁷⁷ Packer, 170-171.

²⁷⁸ Sproul, vol. 2, 100.

“Accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous” [basis of relationship in adoption, standing]	“and those graces so <u>stirred up</u> ” [unto them] [based on the relationship, growing]
“Not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ” [person made just by Christ outside of him/her]	“increased [unto them]” [person cooperates with Holy Spirit within him/her]
“By God imputed to them” [forensic = declared innocent by God and so may live with God]	“strengthened [unto them]” [relational, developed by infusing of life support from God]
“Received by faith alone” [instrument given to receive holy credit of Christ]	“as that they <u>more and more die</u> unto sin, and <u>rise</u> unto newness of life.” [faith and person instruments of Holy Spirit]

Westminster Larger Catechism Question 77: “Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?” Answer: “Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that ...”	
<i>Justification</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>
“God in justification <u>imputeth</u> the righteousness of Christ,” [imputed, represented attribute]	“in sanctification his Spirit <u>infuseth</u> grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof;” [imparting, filling of nature]
“in the former, sin is pardoned;” [completed act, <i>guilt</i> of sin is dealt with]	“in the other, it is subdued;” [ongoing work, <i>defilement</i> of sin is dealt with]
“the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God,” [comprehensive, all exactly the same]	“the other is neither equal in all,” [continual, all are in different situations, efforts]
“and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation;” [completed position in present]	“nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.” [completed person in heaven]

Some closing words from Thomas Watson on sanctification (note that he gives extra attention to the benefits which flow from sanctification per the WSC 36: assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end; we will reserve quoting him for the first and last in the list for the chapters in the WCF that directly address them, and share some from the middle three he touches on):

“[Sanctification is] ‘the reflex act of faith’ ...” (250). PEACE OF CONSCIENCE: “Peace, in Scripture, is compared to a river which parts itself into two sliver streams. Isa lxvi 12. I. *There is an external peace* ... Psa cxlvii ... Peace ecclesiastical stands in opposition to schism and persecution. II. *A spiritual peace*, which is twofold; peace above us, or peace with God; and peace within us, or peace with conscience ...” (261). “Peace flows from sanctification, but they being unregenerate,

have nothing to do with peace. ‘There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.’ Isa lvii 2I ... The seeming peace a sinner has, is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but the ignorance of his danger” (262). “You may as well such health out of poison, as peace out of sin” (262). “True peace flows from union with Christ ... from subjection to Christ ... Isa ix 7 ... If Christ be our peace, he is our prince. Isa ix 6. Whenever Christ pacifies the conscience, he subdues the lust ... True peace is after trouble ... God pours the golden oil of peace into broken hearts” (263). To encourage the doubting of their own calling: “... being sensible of corruption, argues a gracious principle. Rom. vii 2I. Again, Whence is it that there is a combat with sin, but from the life of grace? Gal v 17. Dead things cannot combat. Whence is it that the saints weep for sin? What are these tears but seeds of faith? The not understanding of this hinders a Christian’s peace” (264). “When Christians abate their fervency, God abates their peace. If you slacken the strings of a viol, the music is spoiled; so, if Christians slack in duty, they spoil the sweet music of peace in their souls. As the fire decays, the cold increases; so, as fervency in duty abates, our peace cools” (264). “A guilty conscience clips the wings of prayer ...” (264). “Peace is the result of pardon” (265). “Psa iv 8. It was a sad time with David ... Yet at this time he says, ‘I will lay me down in peace, and sleep.’ He had trouble from his son, but peace from his conscience. David could sleep upon the soft pillow of a good conscience. This is a peace worth getting” (265). “Duties must not be neglected, nor yet idolized. Look to the blood of sprinkling. Heb xii 24. That blood of Christ which pacified God, must pacify conscience” (266). “Walk closely with God. Peace flows from purity” (266). JOY: “Joy is not a fancy ... but is rational, and arises from the feeling of some good, as the sense of God’s love and favour. Joy is so real a thing that it makes a sudden change in a person; and turns mourning into melody” (267). “Joy stupefies and swallows up troubles ...” (267). “Seasons which God usually gives his people divine joys ... five Seasons. (I.) Sometimes at the blessed Supper ... (2.) Before God calls his people to suffering ... (3.) After sore conflicts with Satan ... (4.) After desertion ... (5.) At the hour of death. Of those even who have had no joy in their lifetime. God puts this sugar in the bottom of the cup, to make their death sweet ... when their appetite to meat fails, he feeds them with hidden manna” (269). Spiritual joys “are satisfying joys ... I Thess i 6. These are roses that grow in winter ...” 2 Cor vi 10” (270). “Because it is self-existent, it can subsist in the absence of all other carnal joy. This joy depends not upon outward things ... for it is built on the love of God, on the promises, and on the blood of Christ” (271). “Because spiritual joy carries the soul through duty cheerfully; the Sabbath becomes a delight, and religion is a recreation ... Isa lvi 7) (271). “‘My soul shall be glad in the Lord.’ Psa civ 34 ... see that religion is no melancholy thing; it brings joy; the fruit of the Spirit is joy” (272). “If God gives his people such joy in this life, oh! then, what glorious joy will he give them in heaven! ‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ Matt xxv 2I ... Oh! if a cluster of grapes here be so sweet, what will the full vintage! How may this set us all longing for that place where sorrow cannot live, and where joy cannot die!” (273). GROWTH IN GRACE: “True grace is progressive, of a spreading and growing nature ... A good Christian is like the crocodile ... he has never done growing” (273). “It is to grow less in one’s own eyes ... Psa xxii 6” (273). “The right manner of growth is uniform, growing in one grace as well as another ... spiritual growth is most beautiful, when there is symmetry and proportion, and every grace thrives” (274). “It is the nature of seed to grow ... Grace cannot but grow, from a believer’s ingrafting into Christ ... The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it ... The growing of grace shows it to be alive in the soul” (274). “The more we grow in grace, the more glory we bring to God” (275). “The growth of grace will hinder the growth of corruption” (275). “Such as do not grow in grace, decay in grace ... The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory” (276). “The first sign of our growing, is, when we have got beyond our former measures of grace. It is a sign a child thrives when he has outgrown his clothes ... That competency of grace we once had is too scanty for us now; we have outgrown ourselves” (27). “[The second sign of growing] ... When we are more firmly rooted in religion ... the spreading of the root shows the growth of the tree. Col ii 7” (277). “Take heed of that which will

hinder growth, as the love of any sin ... Use all means for growth in grace ... I Tim iv 7. The body grows stronger by exercise ... be humble Christians ... Pray to God for spiritual growth. Some pray that they may grow in gifts. It is better to grow in grace than gifts ... Heb xii 10. The vine grows by pruning. God's pruning-knife is to make us grow more in grace" (278).

Assigned Reading for February 16, 2022: Saving Faith and Repentance Unto Life

- WCF chapters 14 and 15 and corresponding Scriptures
- WLC 72-73, 76, 153 and corresponding Scriptures
- WSC 85-87 and corresponding Scriptures

Suggested Readings:

- *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, John Owen
- *The Doctrine of Justification*, James Buchanan
- *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges
- *God's Way of Holiness*, Horatius Bonar
- *Heaven Taken By Storm*, Thomas Watson