

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q 35. What is sanctification?

A. 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.

Scripture References: II Thess. 2:13. Eph. 4:23, 24. Rom. 6:4, 6, 14. Rom. 8:4.

Questions:

1. How does sanctification differ from justification?

Justification is complete at once; sanctification is a process carried on by degrees to perfection in glory. Justification alters a man's position or standing before God; sanctification is a real change as it changes a man's heart and life. Justification is an act of God without us; sanctification is the work of God, renewing us within as we use the means of grace.

2. What does the word "sanctify" mean in Scripture?

The word is used in two ways in Scripture. (1) To set apart from a common to a sacred use (John 10:36). (2) To render morally pure or holy (I Cor. 6:11).

3. Where does sanctification do its work in the believer?

Sanctification does its work in the heart of the believer, in the new man. God does a work of renovation in us after his image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

4. When we speak of the "new man" what do we mean?

We mean the new nature personified as the believer's regenerate self, a nature "created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4:24).

5. What are the two parts to sanctification?

The two parts are (1) Mortification—in which we are enabled to die more and more unto sin (Rom. 6:11). (2) Vivification—in which our natures are quickened by the power of grace so that we live unto righteousness (Rom. 6:13).

6. Of what use is sanctification in the believer?

Sanctification is the evidence of our justification and faith and it is necessary if we are to live to the glory of God. It is a necessary aspect of our preparation to meet God, for without holiness no man shall see God.

SANCTIFICATION — A GRACE AND A DUTY

A very important aspect of sanctification was stated by A. A. Hodge when he wrote, "The Holy Ghost gives the grace, and prompts and directs in its exercise, and the soul exercises it. Thus, while sanctification is a grace, it is also a duty; and the soul is both bound and encouraged to use with diligence, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, all the means for its spiritual renovation, and to form those habits of resisting evil and of right action in which sanctification so largely consists." (Confession of Faith, Pg. 196).

The Bible deals many times with the responsibility of the believer regarding his part in the process of sanctification taking place within himself. In Galatians 5:24 we find, ". . . crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts". Indeed a verb of action in the word "crucify" is used. In Colossians 3:5 we find, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." Again a verb of action is used, action on the part of the believer. Lightfoot has a note on this passage in which he says, "Carry out this principle of death (mortify), and kill everything that is mundane and carnal in your being."

This teaching regarding sanctification has been neglected many times by the church. The Belgic Confession in Article 24 makes it very plain when it states, "Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith. The teaching according to Scripture is very plain: We are justified by faith even before we do good works; we then believe that this true faith will enable us to live a new life, a life of good works that proceed from the good root of faith.

The question has been asked many times, "How can this be done by the believer?" Four good suggestions, all of which must be applied by the Holy Spirit, are: (1) Keep things out of mind that are contrary to Scripture. (2) Watchfulness - in Eph. 6:18 the word "watching" comes from two words: "to chase" and "sleep". (3) Avoid occasion for sin. (4) Keep the body "under", don't pamper it, discipline it! It is to be noted that all these are verbs of action on the part of the believer, action put into operation by the Holy Spirit as the believer is "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." (2 Cor. 7:1).

These four will never be done unless the Christian is faithful in Bible study, Prayer and Regular Attendance in worship.

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