

2 Cor.7:1 (WCF 13:2-3) “The Sanctification Shuffle”

For the Children: The Bible sometimes describes Jesus as having given us a new set of pure white clothes. In other words, because of Jesus' death for us, God looks at us as if we were spotless, free of all sin. But it is as if we then go and put some of our old clothes back on over the top of the ones He has given us. We may think our old clothes are clean. But when you look closely, you find that they have dirt and grease spots. So there is the way God looks at us for Jesus' sake, and there is the fact that we ourselves are far from perfect. Because God hates sin and cares about us, He tells us to use His help to start getting rid of the dirt and grease of sin. That will take your whole life, and even then you will only make a small start. Just as well God looks at us as clean because of His Son. **Questions:** What has Jesus done to make us completely clean? What can we do, with God's help, to “clean up our act”? What is the “war” that is going on in our lives?

Introduction:

First Point: The Need for Ongoing Sanctification

- 1) **We Are Already Clean:** At first glance, it might seem as if there is no need for ongoing sanctification. In Christ, we already have the removal of the guilt, penalty and condemnation for sin. We have His obedience and good works counted as ours. We have His daily intercession. His resurrection life and power are imparted to us by the work of His Word and Spirit. We also have the promise of 1 Cor.10:13.
- 2) **But We Need Ongoing Cleansing:** We are commanded to resist sin (Rom.13:12-14; Gal.5:22-25; Col. 3:5-10). We are exhorted to “cleanse ourselves from all defilement...perfecting holiness...” This does not imply the perfect practice of holiness. But it does mean that we are to deal with our sin whenever we find it and to keep on moving towards the goal of sanctification. This implies that we are NOT completely clean in practice. It is important to realize this and repent of our sins. WCF 13:2 explains that there is a remnant of corruption in every part of us. That is why we need ongoing sanctification even though our sins are all forgiven.

Second Point: The Nature of Ongoing Sanctification

- 1) **Recognizing That We Are at War:** An important part of ongoing sanctification is recognizing that we are in a war against a merciless enemy. Temptation should be viewed in that light.
- 2) **Recognizing That It Is an Irreconcilable War:** We are exhorted to cleanse ourselves of *all* defilement. There should be no truce or compromise with sin. Accepting that is also an important part of ongoing sanctification.
- 3) **Recognizing That War Involves Killing:** Sanctification includes the “mortification” of sin – actually putting it to death as we become aware of it. This is based on Christ's death because of our sin and His victory over it. See Col.3:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24. We should strive to avoid situations where we might be seriously tempted, and seek the Lord's help to eradicate sin when we do fall into temptation.
- 4) **Recognizing That Sanctification Involves Active Pursuit:** We are not called upon to be neutral, but to pursue holiness actively – “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” That means utilizing the means of grace. See Eph.6:10ff. The work of Christ for us, and His Word and Spirit in us, require this of us. Even though corruption may seem to prevail for a time, the Lord moves us forward in the process of sanctification, supplying the strength we need.

Third Point: The Motive for Ongoing Sanctification

- 1) **The Fear of the Lord:** Reverence for God's sovereignty, holiness and mercy is necessary for sanctification.
- 2) **Having These Promises:** The text looks back to the promises of 6:16-18. The promise of God's Fatherly Presence creates gratitude in us – a major motive for desiring ongoing sanctification. These promises also create a desire to separate from evil, for the Lord's blessing is upon those who shun evil, rather than on those who give themselves over to it – though we do not earn His favour by our holy behaviour. Immersing ourselves in His Word and fixing our eyes upon the Lord Jesus increase this motive of gratitude.

Conclusion: