

The Doctrine of Sanctification 12. Its Procurer

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Transcript

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We have now reached what is to our mind the most important and certainly the most blessed aspect of our many-sided subject, yet that which is the least understood in not a few circles of Christendom. It is the objective side of sanctification that we now turn to, that perfect and unforfeitable holiness which every believer has in Christ. We are not now going to write upon sanctification as a moral quality or attribute, nor of that which is a matter of experience or attainment by us; rather shall we contemplate something entirely outside ourselves, namely, that which is a fundamental part of our standing and state in Christ. That which we are about to consider is one of those "spiritual blessings" which God has blest us with "in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). It is an immediate consequence of His blood-shedding, and results from our actual union with Him as "the Holy One of God." It is that which His perfect offering has sanctified us unto, as well as what it has sanctified us from. Among all the terrible effects and fruits which sin produces, the two chief are alienation from God and condemnation by God: sin necessarily excludes from His sanctuary, and brings the sinner before the judgment seat of His law. Contrariwise, among all the blessed fruits and effects which Christ's sacrifice procures, the two chief ones are justification and sanctification: it cannot be otherwise. Inasmuch as Christ's sacrifice has "put away" (Heb. 9:26), "made an end" (Dan. 9:24) of the sins of His people, they are not only freed from all condemnation, but they are also given the right and the meetness to draw nigh unto God as purged worshippers. Sin not only entails guilt, it defiles; and the blood of Christ has not only secured pardon, it cleanses. Yet simple, clear, and conclusive as is this dual fact, Christians find it much harder to apprehend the second part of it than they do the first. When we first believed in Christ, and "the burden of our sins rolled away," we supposed that (as one hymn expresses it) we would be "happy all the day." Assured of God's forgiveness, that we had entered His family by the new birth, and that an eternity with Christ in unclouded bliss was our certain inheritance, what could possibly dampen our joy? Ah, but it was not long before we discovered that we were still sinners, living in a world of sin: yea, as time went on, we were made more and more conscious of the sink of iniquity that indwells us, ever sending forth its foul streams, polluting our thoughts, words and actions. This forced from us the agonized inquiry, How can such vile creatures as we see, feel, and know ourselves to be, either pray to, serve, or worship the thrice holy God? Only in His own blessed Word can be found a sufficient and a satisfying answer to this burning question. "The epistle to the Romans, is, as is well known, that part of Scripture in which the question of justification is most fully treated. There, especially, we are taught to think of God as a Judge presiding in the Courts of His holy judgment.

Accordingly, the expressions employed throughout that epistle are 'forensic,' or 'judicial.' They refer to our relation to God, or His relation to us, in His judicial Courts—the great question there being, how criminals can be brought into such a relation to Him, as to have, not criminality, but righteousness, imputed to them. "But if, in the epistle to the Romans, we see God in the Courts of His judgment, equally in the epistle to the Hebrews we see Him in the Temple of His worship. 'Sanctified' is a word that has the same prominence in the epistle to the Hebrews that 'justified' has in the epistle to the Romans. It is a Temple-word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His worship, just as 'justified' is a forensic word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His judgment. Before there can be any question about serving or worshipping God acceptably, the necessity of His holiness requires that the claims both of the Courts of His judgment, and also of the Courts of His worship, should be fully met. He who is regarded in the, judicial Courts of God as an unpardoned criminal, or who, in relation to the Temple of God, is regarded as having the stains of his guilt upon him, cannot be allowed to take his stand among God's servants. No leper that was not thoroughly cleansed could serve in the Tabernacle. The existence of one stain not adequately covered by compensatory atonement, shuts out from the presence of God. "We must stand 'uncharged' in relation to the judicial Courts of God and imputatively 'spotless' in relation to the Courts of His worship: in other words, we must be perfectly 'justified' and perfectly 'sanctified' before we can attempt to worship or serve Him. 'Sanctification,' therefore, when used in this sense, is not to be contrasted with justification, as if the latter were complete, but the former incomplete and progressive. Both are complete to the believer. The same moment that brings the complete 'justification' of the fifth of Romans, brings the equally complete 'sanctification' of the tenth of Hebrews—both being equally needed in order that God, as respects the claims of His holiness, might be 'appeased' or 'placated' toward us; and therefore equally needed as prerequisites to our entrance on the worship and service of God in His heavenly Temple: for until wrath is effectually appeased there can be no entrance into heaven. "The complete and finished sanctification of believers by the blood of Jesus, is the great subject of the ninth and tenth of the Hebrews. 'The blood of bulls and goats' gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a title to enter into the courts of the typical tabernacle, but that title was not an abiding title. It was no sooner gained than it was lost by the first recurring taint. Repetition therefore of offering and repetition of sprinkling was needed again and again. The same circle was endlessly trodden and retrodden; and yet never was perpetuity of acceptance obtained. The tabernacle and its services were but shadows; but they teach us that, as 'the blood of bulls and goats' gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a temporary title to enter into that typical tabernacle; so, the blood of Christ, once offered, gives to all those who are once sprinkled therewith (and all believers are sprinkled) a title, not temporary, but abiding, to enter into God's presence as those who are sanctified for Heaven" (B. W. Newton). "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:10, 14). These blessed declarations have no reference whatsoever to anything which the Spirit does in the Christian, but relate exclusively to what Christ has secured for them. They speak of that which results from our identification with Christ. They affirm that by virtue of the Sacrifice of Calvary every believer is not only counted righteous in the Courts of God's judgment, but is perfectly hallowed for the Courts of His worship. The precious blood of the Lamb not only delivers from Hell, but it also fits us for Heaven. By the redemptive work of Christ the entire Church has been set apart, consecrated unto and accepted by God. The grand truth is that the feeblest and most uninstructed believer was as completely sanctified before God the first moment that he trusted in Christ, as he will be when he dwells in Heaven in his glorified state. True, both his sphere and his circumstances will then be quite different from what they now are: nevertheless, his title to Heaven, his meetness for the immediate presence of the thrice Holy One, will be no better then than it is to-day. It is his relation to Christ (and that alone) which qualifies him to enter the

Father's House; and it is his relation to Christ (and that alone) which gives him the right to now draw nigh within the veil. True, the believer still carries around with him "this body of death" (a depraved nature), but that affects not his perfect standing, his completeness in Christ, his acceptance, his justification and sanctification before God. But, as we said in an earlier paragraph, the Christian finds it much easier to believe in or grasp the truth of justification, than he does of his present perfect sanctification in Christ. For this reason we deem it advisable to proceed slowly and enter rather fully into this aspect of our subject. Let us begin with our Lord's own words in John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Unto what did Christ allude when He there spoke of sanctifying Himself? Certainly He could not possibly be referring to anything subjective or experimental, for in His own person He was "the Holy One of God," and as such, He could not increase in holiness, or become more holy. His language then must have respect unto what was objective, relating to the exercise of His mediatorial office. When Christ said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," He denoted that He was then on the very point of dedicating Himself to the full and final execution of the work of making Himself a sacrifice for sin, to satisfy all the demands of God's law and Justice. Christ, then, was therein expressing His readiness to present Himself before the Father as the Surety of His People to place Himself on the altar as a vicarious propitiation for His Church. It was "for the sake" of others that He sanctified Himself: for the sake of His eleven apostles, who are there to be regarded as the representatives of the entire Election of Grace. It is on their behalf, for their express benefit, that He set Himself apart unto the full discharge of His mediatorial office, that the fruit thereof might redound unto them. Christ unreservedly devoted Himself unto God, that His people might reap the full advantages thereof. The particular end here mentioned of Christ's sanctifying Himself was "that they also might be sanctified through the truth," which is a very faulty rendering of the original, the Greek preposition being "in" and not "through," and there is no article before "truth." The marginal rendering, therefore, is much to be preferred: "that they might be truly sanctified"—Bagster's interlinear and the R. V. give "sanctified in truth." The meaning is "that they might be" actually, really, verily "sanctified"—in contrast from the typical and ceremonial sanctification which obtained under the Mosaic dispensation: compare John 4:24; Col. 1:6; 1 John 3:18 for "in truth." As the of Christ's sanctifying Himself—devoting Himself as whole burnt offering to God, His people are perfectly sanctified their sins are put away, their persons are cleansed from all defilement; and not only so, but the excellency of His infinitely meritorious work is imputed to them, so that they are perfectly acceptable to God, meet for His presence, fitted for His worship. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that sanctified" (Heb. 10:14)—not by anything which the Spirit works in them, but solely by what Christ's sanctifying of Him-self has wrought for them. It is this sanctification in and through Christ which gives Christians their priestly character, the title to draw near unto God within the veil as purged worshippers. Access to God, or the worship of a people made nigh by blood, was central in the Divinely appointed system of Judaism (Heb. 9 :13). The antitype, the substance, the blessed reality of this, is what Christ has secured for His Church. Believers are already perfectly sanctified objectively, as the immediate fruit of the Savior's sacrifice. Priestly nearness is now their blessed portion in consequence of Christ's priestly offering of Himself. This it is, and nought else, which gives us "boldness to enter into the Holiest" (Heb. 10:19). Many Christians who are quite clear that they must look alone to Christ for their justification before God, often fail to view Him as their complete sanctification before God. But this ought not to be, for Scripture is just as clear on the one point as on the other; yea, the two are therein inseparably joined together. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1 :30). And here we must dissent from the exposition of this verse given by Chas. Hodge (in his commentary) and others of his school, who interpret "sanctification" here as Christ's Spirit indwelling His people as the Spirit of holiness, transforming them unto His likeness. But this

verse is speaking of that sanctification which Christ is made unto us, and not that which we are made by Christ—the distinction is real and vital, and to ignore or confound it is inexcusable in a theologian. Christ crucified (see the context of 1 Cor. 1:30—verses 17, 18, 23), "of God is made unto us" four things, and this is precisely the same way that God "made Him (Christ) to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), namely, objectively and imputatively. First, Christ is "made unto us Wisdom," objectively, for He is the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, it is true that by the Spirit we are made wise unto salvation, nevertheless, we are far from being as wise as we ought to be—see 1 Corinthians 8:2. But all the wisdom God requires of us is found in Christ, and as the "Wisdom" of the book of Proverbs, He is ours. Second, Christ is "made unto us Righteous-ness," objectively, as He is Himself "The Lord our righteous-ness" (Jer. 23 :6), and therefore does the believer exclaim, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45 :24). As the law raises its accusing voice against me, I point to Christ as the One who has, by His active and passive obedience, met its every demand on my behalf. Third, Christ is "made unto us Sanctification," objectively: in Him we have an absolute purity, and by the imputation to us of the efficacy and merits of His cross-work we who were excluded from God on account of sin, are now given access to Him. If Israel became a holy people when sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats, so that they were readmitted to Jehovah's worship, how much more has the infinitely valuable blood of Christ sanctified us, so that we may approach God as acceptable worshippers. This sanctification is not something which we have in our own persons, but was ours in Christ as soon as we laid hold of Him by faith. Fourth, Christ is "made unto us Redemption," objectively: He is in His own person both our Redeemer and Redemption—"in whom we have redemption" (Eph. 1:7). Christ is "made unto us Redemption" not by enabling us to redeem ourselves, but by Himself paying the price. 1 Corinthians 1:30, then, affirms that we are complete in Christ: that whatever the law demands of us, it has received on our account in the Surety. If we are considered as what we are in ourselves, not as we stand in Christ (as one with Him), then a thousand things may be "laid to our charge." It may be laid to our charge that we are woefully ignorant of many parts of the Divine will: but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Wisdom. It may be laid to our charge that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: but the sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Righteousness. It may be laid to our charge that we do many things and fail to do many others which unfit us for the presence of a holy God: but the sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Sanctification. It may be laid to our charge that we are largely in bondage to the flesh: but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:30, then, is a unit: we cannot define the "wisdom" and the "sanctification" as what the Spirit works in us, and the "righteousness" and the "redemption" as what Christ has wrought for us: all four are either objective or subjective. Christ is here said to be "sanctification" unto us, just as He is our righteousness and redemption. To suppose that the sanctification here spoken of is that which is wrought in us, would oblige me to explain the righteousness and redemption here spoken of, as that which we had in ourselves; but such a thought Mr. Hodge would rightly have rejected with abhorrence. The righteousness which Christ is "made unto us" is most certainly not the righteousness which He works in us (the Romanist heresy), but the righteousness which He wrought out for us. So it is with the sanctification which Christ is "made unto us" it is not in ourselves, but in Him; it is not an incomplete and progressive thing, but a perfect and eternal one. God has made Christ to be sanctification unto us by imputing to us the infinite purity and excellency of His sacrifice. We are made nigh to God by Christ's blood (Eph. 2:13) before we are brought nigh to Him by the effectual call of the Spirit (1 Pet. 2:9): the former being the necessary foundation of the latter—in the types the oil could only be placed upon the blood. And it is on this account we "are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). How vastly different is this—how immeasurably superior to—what the advocates of "the higher life" or the "victorious life" set before their hearers and readers! It is not merely that Christ is able to do this or willing to do that for us, but every Christian is already "sanctified in Christ

Jesus." My ignorance of this does not alter the blessed fact, and neither does my failure to clearly understand nor the weakness of my faith to firmly grasp it, in anywise impair it. Nor have my feelings or experience anything whatever to do with it: God says it, God has done it, and nothing can alter it.

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