

# The Doctrine of Sanctification 16. Its Securer (COMPLETED)

by A.W. Pink

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## Transcript

The Doctrine of Sanctification

16. Its Securer

(COMPLETED)

"Sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13) is a comprehensive expression which has a fourfold significance at least. First, it points to that supernatural operation of the Spirit whereby a sinner is "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10), made vitally one with Him, and thereby a partaker of His holiness. Second, it tells of the vital change which this produces in his relation to the ungodly: having been quickened into newness of life, he is at once separated from those who are dead in sins, so that both as to his standing and state he is no longer with them common to Satan, sin and the world. Third, it speaks of the Spirit Himself taking up His abode in the quickened soul, thereby rendering him personally holy. Fourth, it refers to His bringing the heart into conformity with the Divine law, with all that that connotes. Before taking up this last point, we will offer a few more remarks upon the third. The coming of this Divine and glorious Person to indwell one who is depraved and sinful is both a marvel and a mystery: a marvel that He should, a mystery that He would. How is it possible for Him who is ineffably holy to dwell within those who are so unholy? Not a few have said it is impossible, and were it not for the plain declarations of Scripture thereon, probably all of us would come to the same conclusion. But God's ways are very different from ours, and His love and grace have achieved that which our poor hearts had never conceived of. This has been clearly recognized in connection with the amazing birth, and the still more amazing death of Christ; but it has not been so definitely perceived in connection with the descent of the Spirit to indwell believers. There is a striking analogy between the advent to this earth of the second person of the Trinity and the advent of the third person, and the marvel and mystery of the one should prepare us for the other. Had the same not become an historical fact, who among us had ever supposed that the Father had suffered His beloved Son to enter such depths of degradation as He did? Who among us had ever imagined that the Lord of glory would lie in a manger? But He did! In view of that, why should we be so staggered at the concept of the Holy Spirit's entering our poor hearts? As the Father was pleased to allow the glory of the Son to be eclipsed for a season by the degradation into which He descended, so in a very real sense He suffers the glory of the Spirit to be hid for a season by the humiliation of His tabernacling in our bodies. It is on the ground of Christ's work that the Spirit comes to us. "Whatever we receive here is but the result of the fulness given to us in Christ. If the Spirit comes to dwell in us as the Spirit of peace, it is because Jesus by

His blood, once offered, hath secured for us that peace. If the Spirit comes as the Spirit of glory, it is because Jesus has entered into and secured glory for us. If the Spirit comes as the Spirit of sonship, it is because Jesus has returned for us to the bosom of the Father and brought us into the nearness of the same love. If the Spirit comes to us as the Spirit of life, it is because of the life hidden for us in Christ with God. The indwelling of the Spirit therefore being a result of the abiding relation to God into which the resurrection and ascension of our Lord has brought us, must of necessity be an abiding presence. Consequently, the sanctification which results from the fact of His presence in us and from the fact of the new man being created in us, must be a complete and abiding sanctification—as complete and as abiding as the relation which Christ holds to us in redemption as the Representative and Head of His mystical body" (B. W. Newton). Yet let it be pointed out that, the blessed Spirit does not allow our hearts to remain in the awful condition in which He first finds them; and this brings us to our fourth point. In Titus 3:5 we read "according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." All that is comprehended in this "washing" we may not be able to say, but it certainly includes the casting of all idols out of our hearts, to such an extent that God now occupies the throne of it. By this "washing of regeneration" the soul is so cleansed from its native pollution that sin is no longer loved, but loathed; the Divine law is no longer hated, but delighted in; and the affections are raised from things below unto things above. We are well aware of the fact that this is the particular point which most exercises honest consciences; yet, God does not intend that our difficulties should be so cleared up in this life that all exercise of heart should be at an end. Though it be true that the flesh remains unaltered in the Christian, and that at times its activities are such that our evidences of regeneration are clouded over, yet it remains that a great change was wrought in us at the new birth, the effects of which abide. Though it be true that a sea of corruption still dwells within, and that at times sin rages violently, and so prevails that it seems a mockery to conclude that we have been delivered from its domination; yet this does not alter the fact that a miracle of grace has been wrought within us. Though the Christian is conscious of so much filth within, he has experienced the "washing of regeneration." Before the new birth he saw no beauty in Christ that he should desire Him; but now he views Him as "the Fairest among ten thousand." Before, he loved those like himself; but now he "loves the brethren" (1 John 3:14). Moreover, his understanding has been cleansed from many polluting errors and heresies. Finally, it is a fact that the main stream of his desires runs out after God. But "the washing of regeneration" is only the negative side: positively there is "the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Though this "renewing" falls far short of what will take place in the saint at his glorification, yet it is a very real and radical experience. A great change and renovation is made in the soul, which has a beneficial effect upon all of its faculties. This "renewing of the Holy Spirit" has in it a transforming power, so that the heart and mind are brought into an obediencial frame toward God. The soul is now able to discern that God's will is the most "good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2) of all, and there is a deep desire and a sincere effort made to become conformed thereto. But let it be carefully noted that the present and not the past tense is employed in Titus 3:5—not ye were washed and renewed, but a "washing" and "renewing;" it is a continual work of the Spirit. Ere proceeding to show further the nature of the Spirit's work in the soul in His sanctifying operations, let it be pointed out that what our hearts most need to lay hold of and rest on is that which has been before us in the last few chapters. The believer has already been perfectly sanctified in the decree and purpose of the Father. Christ has wrought out for him that which, when reckoned to his account, perfectly fits him for the courts of God's temple above. The moment he is quickened by the Spirit he is created in Christ," and therefore "sanctified in Christ:" thus both his standing and state are holy in God's sight. Furthermore, the Spirit's indwelling him, making his body His temple, constitutes him personally holy—just as the presence of God in the temple made Canaan the "holy land" and Jerusalem the "holy city." It is of the very first importance that the Christian should be

thoroughly clear upon this point. We do not become saints by holy actions—that is the fundamental error of all false religions. No, we must first be saints before there can be any holy actions, as the fountain must be pure before its stream can be, the tree good if its fruit is to be wholesome. The order of Scripture is "Let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints" (Eph. 5:3), and "but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8); "in behavior as becometh holiness" (Titus 2:3). God first sets our hearts at rest, before He bids our hands engage in His service. He gives life, that we may be capacitated to render love. He creates in us a sanctified nature, that there may be sanctified conduct. God presents us spotless in the Holiest of all according to the blood of sprinkling, that, coming forth with a conscience purged from dead works, we may seek to please and glorify Him. It is the creating of this holy nature within us that we must next consider. "It is something that is holy, both in its principle, and in its actions; and is superior to anything that can come from man, or be performed by himself. It does not lie in a conformity to the light of nature, and the dictates of it; nor is it what may go by the name of moral virtue, which was exercised by some of the heathen philosophers, to a very great degree, and yet they had not a grain of holiness in them; but were full of the lusts of envy, pride, revenge, etc., nor does it lie in a bare, external conformity to the law of God, or in an outward reformation of life and manners: this appeared in the Pharisees to a great degree, who were pure in their own eyes, and thought themselves holier than others, and disdained them, and yet their hearts were full of all manner of impurity. "Nor is it what is called restraining grace: persons may be restrained by the injunction of parents and masters, by the laws of magistrates, and by the ministry of the Word, from the grosser sins of life; and be preserved, by the providence of God, from the pollutions of the world, and yet not be sanctified. Nor are gifts, ordinary or extraordinary, sanctifying grace: Judas Iscariot no doubt had both, the ordinary gifts of a preacher, and the extraordinary gifts of an apostle; yet he was not a holy man. Gifts are not graces: a man may have all gifts and all knowledge, and speak with the tongue of men, and angels, and not have grace; there may be a silver tongue where there is an unsanctified heart. Nor is sanctification a restoration of the lost image of Adam, or an amendment of that image marred by the sin of man; or a new vamping up of the old principles of nature" (John Gill). Having seen what this holy nature, imparted by the Spirit, is not; let us endeavor to define what it is. It is something entirely new: a new creation, a new heart, a new spirit, a new man, the conforming of us to another image, even to that of the last Adam, the Son of God. It is the impartation of a holy principle, implanted in the midst of corruption, like a lovely rosebush growing out of a dung-heap. It is the carrying forward of that "good work" begun in us at regeneration (Phil. 1:6). It is called by many names, such as "the inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16) and "the hidden man of the heart" (1 Pet. 3:4), not only because it has its residence in the soul, but because our fellows can see it not. It is designated "seed" (1 John 3:9) and "spirit" (John 3:6) because it is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. It is likened to a "root" (Job 19:28), to "good treasure of the heart" (Matt. 12:35), to "oil in the vessel" (Matt. 25:4)—by "oil" there is meant grace, so called for its illuminating nature in giving discernment to the understanding, and for its supplying and softening nature, taking off the hardness from the heart and the stubbornness from the will. It is in this aspect of our sanctification that we arrive at the third meaning of the term: the blessed Spirit not only separates from the common herd of the unregenerate, cleanses our hearts from the pollution of sin, but He suitably adorns the temple in which He now dwells. This He does by making us partakers of "the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4), which is a positive thing, the communication of a holy principle, whereby we are "renewed after the image of God." When the Levites were to minister in the holy place, not only were they required to wash themselves, but to put on their priestly attire and ornaments, which were comely and beautiful. In like manner, believers are a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), for they have not only been washed from the filth of sin, but are "all glorious within" (Ps. 45:13). They have not only had the robe of imputed righteousness put upon them (Isa. 61:10), but the beautifying grace of the Spirit has been

implanted in them. It is by the reception of this holy principle or nature that the believer is freed from the domination of sin and brought into the liberty of righteousness, though not until death is he delivered from the plague and presence of sin. At their justification believers obtain a relative or judicial sanctification, which provides for them a perfect standing before God, by which they receive proof of their covenant relationship with Him, that they are His peculiar people, His "treasure," His "portion." But more, they are also inherently sanctified in their persons by a gracious work of the Spirit within their souls. They are "renewed" throughout the whole of their beings; for as the poison of sin was diffused throughout the entire man, so is grace. It helps not a little to perceive that, as Thos. Boston pointed out long ago in his "Man's Fourfold State," "Holiness is not one grace only, but all the graces of the Spirit: it is a constellation of graces; it is all the graces in their seed and root." Yet let it be pointed out that, though the whole of the Christian's person is renewed by the Spirit, and all the faculties of his soul are renovated, nevertheless, there is no operation of grace upon his old nature, so that its evil is expelled: the "flesh" or principle of indwelling sin is neither eradicated nor purified nor made good. Our "old man" (which must be distinguished from the soul and its faculties) is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," and remains so till the end of our earthly pilgrimage, ever striving against the "spirit" or principle of holiness or "new man." As the soul at the very first moment of its union with the body (in the womb) became sinful, so it is not until the moment of its dissolution from the body that the soul becomes inherently sinless. As an old divine quaintly said, "Sin brought death into the world, and God, in a way of holy resentment, makes use of death to put an end to the very being of sin in His saints." Many readers will realize that we are here engaged in grappling with a difficult and intricate point. No man is competent to give such a clear and comprehensive description of our inward sanctification that all difficulty is cleared up: the most he can do is to point out what it is not, and then seek to indicate the direction in which its real nature is to be sought. As a further effort toward this it may be said that, this principle of holiness which the Spirit imparts to the believer consists of spiritual light, whereby the heart is (partly) delivered from the darkness in which the Fall enveloped it. It is such an opening of the eyes of our understandings that we are enabled to see spiritual things and discern their excellency; for before we are sanctified by the Spirit we are totally blind to their reality and beauty: such passages as John 1:5; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9 (read them!) makes this clear. Further, that principle of holiness which the Spirit imparts to the believer consists of spiritual life. Previous to its reception the soul is in a state of spiritual death, that is, it is alienated from and incapacitated toward God. At our renewing by the Spirit, we receive a vital principle of spiritual life: compare John 5:24; 10:11, 28; Romans 8:2; Ephesians 2:1. It is by this new life we are capacitated for communion with and obedience to God. Once more; that principle of holiness consists of spiritual love. The natural man is in a state of enmity with God; but at regeneration there is implanted that which delights in and cleaves to God: compare Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:24. As "light" this principle of holiness affects the understanding, as "life" it influences and moves the will, as "love" it directs and moulds the affections. Thus also it partakes of the very nature of Him who is Light, Life, and Love. "Let the beauty of the Lord be upon us" (Ps. 90:17) signifies "let this principle of holiness (as light, life, and love) be healthy within and made manifest through and by us. But we must now turn to the most important aspect of all, of the nature of this principle of holiness, whereby the Spirit sanctified us inherently. Our experimental sanctification consists in our hearts being conformed to the Divine law. This should be so obvious that no labored argument should be required to establish the fact. As all sin is a transgression of the law (1 John 3 :4), so all holiness must be a fulfilling of the law. The natural man is not subject to the law, neither indeed can he be (Rom. 8:7). Why? Because he is devoid of that principle from which acceptable obedience to the law can proceed. The great requirement of the law is love: love to God, and love to our neighbor; but regarding the unregenerate it is written, "ye have not the

love of God in you" (John 5:42). Hence it is that God's promise to His elect is "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (Deut. 30:6)—for "love is the fulfilling of the law." This is the grand promise of the Covenant: "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb. 8:10); and again, "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. 36:27). As we said in the preceding article: when Christ comes to His people He finds them entirely destitute of holiness, and of every desire after it; but He does not leave them in that awful condition. No, He sends forth the Holy Spirit, communicates to them a sincere love for God, and imparts to them a principle or "nature" which delights in His ways. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). Why? Because any work to be pleasing to Him must proceed from a right principle (love to Him), be performed by a right rule (His Law, or revealed will), and have a right end in view (His glory); and this is only made possible by the sanctification of the Spirit. Experimental holiness is conformity of heart and life to the Divine law. The law of God is "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), and therefore does it require inward righteousness or conformity as well as outward; and this requirement is fully met by the wondrous and gracious provision which God has made for His people. Here again we may behold the striking and blessed cooperation between the Eternal Three. The Father, as the King and Judge of all, gave the Law. The Son, as our Surety, fulfilled the Law. The Spirit is given to work in us conformity to the Law: first, by imparting a nature which loves it; second, by instructing and giving us a knowledge of its extensive requirements; third, by producing in us strivings after obedience to its precepts. Not only is the perfect obedience of Christ imputed to His people, but a nature which delights in the law is imparted to them. But because of the opposition from indwelling sin, perfect obedience to the law is not possible in this life; yet, for Christ's sake, God accepts their sincere but imperfect obedience. We must distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the principle of holiness which He imparts at regeneration: the Creator and the nature He creates must not be confounded. It is by His indwelling the Christian that He sustains and develops, continues and perfects, this good work which he has begun in us. He takes possession of the soul to strengthen and direct its faculties. It is from the principle of holiness which He has communicated to us that there proceeds the fruits of holiness—sanctified desires, actions and works. Yet that new principle or nature has no strength of its own: only as it is daily renewed, empowered, controlled, and directed by its Giver, do we act "as becometh holiness." His continued work of sanctification within us proceeds in the twofold process of the mortification (subduing) of the old man and the vivification (quickenings) of the new man. The fruit of the Spirit's sanctification of us experimentally, appears in our separation from evil and the world. But because of the flesh within, our walk is not perfect. Oftentimes there is little for the eye of sense to distinguish in those in whom the Spirit dwells from the moral and respectable wordlings; yea, often they put us to shame. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." "The world knoweth us not." But the heart is washed from the prevailing love of sin by the tears of repentance which the Christian is moved to frequently shed. Every new act of faith upon the cleansing blood of Christ carries forward the work of experimental sanctification to a further degree. As Naaman was required to dip in the Jordan again and again, yea, seven times, till he was wholly purged of his bodily leprosy; so the soul of the Christian—conscious of so much of the filth of sin still defiling him—continues to dip in that "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." Thank God, one day Christ will "present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

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