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SANCTIFY THEM

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Haverhill, Massachusetts

A Sermon Preached at a National Camp-Meeting

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"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Those who are familiar with the Scriptures, recognize these words as from our Lord's prayer -- the prayer he offered for all believers. Not only for those who were about him, but for all, of all time. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on me through their word."

The prayer was for those about whom He speaks to the Father in these words, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they the Thine. I have given them Thy Word; and the world that hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

That for which he prayed -- the grace he sought for them -- was something distinct from the experience they already had. It was an experience definitely and suddenly realized, as their subsequent history witnesses. That these disciples had grace -- had real Christian experience -- is exceedingly clear in this entire prayer.

"SANCTIFY THEM"

For what did He pray? What is that which this word is made to carry?

Sanctification is used in the Scriptures interchangeably with justification, regeneration, adoption, conversion and the like, but not in that sense alone. The Corinthians are addressed as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and at the same time their entire sanctification is denied, for they are addressed as "yet carnal" and exhorted to perfect "holiness in the fear of God." In Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, prayer is offered that they may be sanctified "wholly."

Sanctification is a double term -- used for the partial work of salvation and for the complete work of salvation. This is a distinction that needs to be kept in mind if confusion of thought would be avoided. What is true of this term and doctrine in the Scriptures is not true of justification or of adoption. To say, "If one is justified or adopted, he is justified and adopted, and that is the end of it and all of it, might be exactly true; but it would not be true to say, "If one is sanctified, he is sanctified, and that is the end of it and all of it." Because, as we have said, sanctification is a double term, having a two-fold meaning, while the other terms are single, having one meaning.

It may be best, for the clearest understanding, to always use the qualifying word "entire" when one means complete sanctification, but it is not necessary to do so in the interest of exact statement. We use the term sanctification here in its completed sense. Sanctification is not

EXEMPTION FROM TEMPTATION

Instead of the sanctified being placed, because of the experience, where they are no longer tempted (as certain persist in saying is taught), they are placed where they may be, and probably are tempted more severely than ever before. Since temptation is a process of discipline and development, larger tests may be placed on one, since the nature to be developed is stronger to bear it. An adult would need more rugged and violent exercise to strengthen his muscle than a mere child would. The difference between one sanctified and one not sanctified is the difference between an adult and a child.

Sanctification is not exemption from

ALL LIABILITY OF FALLING

Instead of teaching, as some affirm we do, that a sanctified soul has come to a place where he cannot fall, we instantly and constantly declare its opposite. The experience and grace of sanctification enhance one's probabilities of standing -- make one more sure. Sanctification places one where he may not fall, not where he cannot. It is one thing to be able not to fall, and quite another not to be able to fall. We teach the former.

Sanctification is not exemption from

MISTAKES

What are mistakes, primarily, but errors of judgment? No amount of grace changes one's essential nature. Man's essential nature is finite, limited, restricted. Such a nature not only can err, it must err in the very nature of things. No mind, save an infinite mind, can be free from errors of thinking.

Hence sanctification is not exemption from

WRONG PRACTICES

Conduct cannot be better than conviction. No one will make his living better than what he sees it should be. If it be better, it would be a mistake, for it would be doing better than he intended. Judgment must graduate conduct. If judgment be astray, practice must be. Blessed is the man, if not happy, who brings his conduct into harmony with his convictions.

Since one does not always know just the exact right, so he will not always do just the exact right.

But, such wrong conduct is not condemnable, either by God or man. Because the intention was right. A loving father prepares a medicine for his sick child, but by mistake, he poisons it. Who condemns him? Neither God nor man. His intention saves him from the clutches of the law and from divine penalty.

Sanctification is not a better ethical or outward life than justification. Surely one must be true to his light to keep justified, and no one can be more than true to his light. Justification demands as correct outward deportment as sanctification does. It is a grave error to think because one is only justified, and makes no confession of holiness, he may be indifferent as to his conduct. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."

Sanctification may clarify the vision -- may cause one to see the divine requirement more fully, and in that way change the outward conduct; but it does not have to do with outward conduct, primarily, in contradistinction to justification.

Sanctification is not alone

SALVATION

That is, there is a salvation apart from sanctification; we mean to say, one who is not sanctified has a salvation.

The Scriptures call attention to the places of ultimate human destiny -- heaven and hell. None go there by any sovereign decree. God does not say to one, "You shall go to heaven," and to another, "You shall go to hell." Character -- what one is -- graduates destiny. What one is, is determined by his relation to Jesus Christ; He is the touchstone of character. One goes to heaven because he is fitted for heaven; there is no other place for him in the universe of God; he is heavenly and must go to his own place. So, one goes to hell because he is fitted for hell; there is no other place for him, he goes to his own place. As a falling body strikes the earth by natural law, so a sinful, sinning soul drops into hell, under a law of its nature. As a live bird, freed from confinement, flies away and up, so a holy, heavenly soul, goes to God and heaven by the law of its nature.

A salvation may exist without fitness for heaven. A sinning soul comes to the altar for prayer. He is converted, hopefully, soundly converted. We say he is saved, and we say well, for so he is. He is justified freely -- treated by God as though he had never sinned; he is regenerated graciously, new life imparted to him; he is adopted fully, made "an heir of God and a joint heir

with Jesus Christ." He is saved, saved from the guilt, dominion and choice of sin. But is he fully saved? Is he delivered from "all sin," and thus fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light? Experience, theology and the Scriptures says "No." What say the theologians? Says the eminent Dr. Hodge of Princeton, "According to the Scriptures and the undeniable evidence of history, regeneration does not remove all sin." The renowned preacher, Frederick W. Robertson, remarks on the fifty-first Psalm, "Two sides of our mysterious two-fold being here. Something in us near to hell; something strangely near to God. Half diabolical -- half divine: half demon -- half God. In our best estate and in our purest moments, there is a something of the devil in us, which, if it could be known, would make men shrink from us. The germs of the worst crimes are in us all." The senior Dr. Tyng says to young communicants, "Be watchful, your Christian course is to be maintained in the midst of temptations. Though truly a child of God, you still carry with you a heart far from sanctified, a remaining sinfulness of nature in its appetites and propensities, which demand unceasing vigilance. You cannot afford to relax your vigilance over these outgoings of your own sinful nature." John Wesley says, "That believers [regenerate persons] are delivered from the guilt and power of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the being of sin we deny." The Holy Spirit declares, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

Here is an unlikeness to heaven in those who are really Christians; here is a salvation, and yet that with it, which heaven has nothing of. "There shall in nowise enter in to it anything that defileth."

Just here, experience is indisputable -- all know there is a condition of wrongness within them after regeneration.

In the gospel, provision is made for its removal, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. Cleanseth us from all sin."

The method of recovery is by

CO-OPERATION

The same as in regeneration. The truth is preached to a sinner. He sees his need, accepts the gospel and is saved. Thus he has co-operated with the truth unto his salvation. Just so is one recovered from all sin. He hears the truth, sees his need, apprehends his privilege, and, accepting the proffer, enters into full redemption -- is sanctified.

But there is another class of people, Christians, to whom the truth has not thus specifically come. They, though seeing their need of holiness, do not understand it to be their privilege to possess it; and they go on through life without it, and so far as we know, die with no added light upon the question. A most frequent and obstinate objection to the doctrine of holiness is voiced in these words, "What becomes of these good people who know nothing of this truth. They are Christians, and good Christians; they are not manifestly, entirely sanctified; now, if this experience is absolutely needful in order to enter heaven, and they know nothing about it, what of them? Are they lost?"

This leads to our saying: There is another feature of the process of recovery from all sin, which is, the ministry of the Holy Spirit upon a passive or nonresisting agent. What is meant by a "passive or nonresisting agent?" Here, for instance, is a child one year old. Is that child a responsible moral agent? No, it has not yet come to the time of responsibility. Is the child in a saved state? i. e., if it were to die at that time of life, would it be saved? We all, unhesitatingly, say "Yes." But let us stop for a moment. While the child is innocent from any actual and voluntary transgression, is it free from all sinfulness? Has it no moral taint, no indwelling sin-principle? As this precious babe lies in its mother's lap, you are interested, only in its gentle cooing and sweet smiling but you are struck by the presence of something beside gentleness and sweetness. See its little body straighten and its feet fly; hear its yell and squall while the face reddens, indicating, unmistakably, what in an adult would properly be called rage.

Parents speak of it as "spunk," "naughtiness," "temper" and the like. It is sin -- real, inner badness. Not voluntary and responsible wrong-doing, but real and lamentable wrong being. We cannot hesitate to declare that the child has in its little self-hood, something they do not have in heaven. That exhibition of spirit and temper is impossible there. No question is raised here as to the probability of its being taken to heaven in the case of death, but that it would not be taken there without change. Certainly, that something we recognize present in the child must be absent in order unto its admission there.

Paul states the actual, gracious condition and standing of such children, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." "Life," "justification of life," is the inheritance of this child by virtue of the atonement. He farther says, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Justification secures glorification; but, in the nature of things, not without farther change. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," applies to irresponsible children as to men.

Now, since this life is the period of probation and recovery from sin must be here; since the child has sinfulness of nature; since no such element of character is admitted to heaven; since this child is in irresponsibility; we conclude the Holy Spirit applies to the child the merit of Christ's sacrifice, sanctifying and cleansing it from all sin. The child is a passive, not-resisting agent, and its salvation is the salvation of one who is not a voluntary, active agent, but of an involuntary, passive one. This is our meaning of the "ministry of the Holy Spirit upon a passive, nonresisting agent."

The eminent Dr. Hovey, in "Biblical Eschatology," teaches, "From the fact that no account of the last judgment refers to the case of infants or idiots, we think it rational to infer that, from the beginning of time, the effect of the fall upon their moral nature has been removed by the Saviour, through the work of the Spirit, before they enter the life to come. No other hypothesis agrees so well with the assuring silence of Scripture in regard to their destiny; for we are unable to find within the lids of the Bible any hint of their being lost forever, or any faintest suggestion of prayer for their renewal after death. It is, therefore, safe to trust that, in the case of those who are thus removed from the only hopeful state of probation, the second Adam has, by His perfect grace, destroyed the work of the first Adam."

What now is true of infants, we apprehend is true of adults, about whom question is raised. What becomes of these good people? If they are Christians, as is claimed for them, they are justified; if justified, they are entitled to glorification; nothing but a forfeiture of their justification can defeat their glorification. If they had no light on farther privilege and duty they did not reject light; not rejecting light, but walking in all they had, kept them continually in the Lord's hands, and the Lord can and will care for all souls who trust [here the printed book text ends with no punctuation -- perhaps the final word "Him" with a concluding period was inadvertently omitted. -- DVM]

We have no fear about irresponsible children, idiots and the heathen, "who do by nature the things contained in the law." We have no concern about good people who love God and seek to keep His commandments, but who are so circumstanced as they have limited light on Christian attainment. Our concern is for those who have light, that they may improve it and not fall into condemnation by its rejection.

All justified people -- are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Nothing but a refusal to comply with whatever conditions God places upon one, brings condemnation and causes forfeiture of the child-relation and experience. This condemnation perils the soul, and if not recovered from, causes its loss forever. The secret of its being lost is not so much that sanctification was not experienced as that justification was not maintained, and justification was lost by refusing the farther light of sanctification. The eminent Mr. Fletcher taught that the grace of the Holy Spirit, sanctifies all who do not resist His influences.

Our answer, then, to the question as to what becomes of good people who knew nothing about sanctification as such, is, God takes them to heaven; but not without sanctifying them. They are saved on exactly the same principle that irresponsible children, idiots and the heathen, who do not reject what light they have, are saved, as passive, non-resisting agents. He who is justified is sure of heaven; but, if farther light is given to Christian privilege and duty, he must most certainly accept and walk in it to maintain his justification.

Says Bishop William Taylor, who has had no little observation of Christian experience and who is no mean theologian, "What, do you mean to say that a justified soul is in danger of being lost? Nay, justification by faith secures to us a title to heaven, holiness, the fitness for it, but the justified soul is in the immediate care of the Holy Sanctifier, who holds the keys of the gates of death and will perfect His work before He opens the gates; but the man or woman who dares to ignore a positive command of God and neglect a palpable duty, will hereby disjoint their justified relation, grieve the Holy Spirit of God and fall into the snare of Satan."

Many souls, then, are lost, not primarily because they were not sanctified, but because they were not justified; and many such lost their justification by refusing sanctification.

Sanctification is entire and perpetual dedication of the whole self-hood to God.

"Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind and will;
All my goods and all my hours;

All I know and all I feel;
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart, but make it new."

Sanctification is the utter expulsion of the sin-principle. It is the fullness of what, before, one has had in part. Sanctification is "an instantaneous deliverance from all sin." It is "the pure love of God and man shed abroad in a faithful believer's heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him to cleanse him and to keep him clean from all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to enable him to fulfill the law of Christ, according to the talents he is intrusted with, and the circumstances in which he is placed in this world." "The degree of original sin which remains in some believers, though not a transgression of a known law, is nevertheless sin, and must be removed before one goes to heaven, and the removal of this evil is what we mean by full sanctification." "Regeneration is the beginning of purification. Entire sanctification is finishing that work,"

"They came to the gates of Canaan,
But they never entered in;
They came to the very threshold,
But they perished in their sin.

"On the morrow they would have entered,
But God had shut the gate;
They wept, they rashly ventured,
But, alas! it was too late.

"And so we are ever coming
To the place where two ways part;
One leads to the land of promise,
And one to a hardened heart.

"Oh, brother, give heed to the warning,
And obey His voice today;
The Spirit to thee is calling,
Oh, do not grieve Him away.

"Oh, come in complete surrender,
Oh, turn from thy doubt and sin;
Pass on from Kadesh to Canaan,
And a crown and kingdom win."

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THE END