CHRIST

Our Sanctification

By

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Many of the Protestant Churches of Christendom are at this time taking a lively interest in a particular form of religious experience known variously as Holiness — Sanctification — Christian Perfection—Perfect Love—The Rest of Faith—The Higher Life —The Life of Faith—Full Salvation —and Christ's Baptism.

This interest is not, as we think, a mere temporary and restless curiosity to hear and learn "some new thing," but the expression rather of a felt need—the need on the part of Christians generally of a closer walk with God, and a deeper work of grace in their souls. There are probably tens of thousands of converted people today, on both sides of the Atlantic, who have been forgiven much and who love much, but who, nevertheless, are mourning over their coldness and deadness, the remains of carnality, the tendencies to sin, the evil heart of unbelief, the roots of

bitterness, the pride, and ill temper, and impurity, and covetousness, and envy, and selfishness that still cleave to them, and make their hearts too much like a cage of unclean birds. Many of these, doubtless, have made up their minds that there is no better state for them in this life than a ceaseless struggle with the inward corruption of their nature, no separation of the soul from sin until the death-struggle is separating the soul from the body, no deliverer and no deliverance on this side of the grave. Others are earnestly inquiring whether there is any hope of freedom from the bondage of sin, even here —whether the same Saviour Who bore their "sins in his own body on the tree," can likewise cleanse them from all sin—and whether "a clean heart, and "a right spirit" are in any way attainable while mind and body are still engaged in active and vigorous service for Christ.

Now, if the plain teaching of Scripture, and the experience of thousands of living witnesses are worth any thing, then all these questions must receive an affirmative answer. There is a deliverer, and there is deliverance. There is such a state as Holiness, Entire Sanctification, Christian Perfection—sometimes received very

soon after conversion, sometimes at a later period, sometimes postponed, always, however, except where conversion itself is a death-bed experience needlessly postponed—till the hour of dissolution. It is the privilege and the duty of every Christian who feels the need of this blessed experience to press after it, and to attain it now.

I

Definition of Terms

Conviction is the work of the Holy Ghost on the heart of the sinner, by which he is made to realize his undone condition and earnestly to desire reconciliation with God.

Repentance is change of mind, a firm resolve to take the necessary steps for securing salvation. It is the result of "godly sorrow" for sin, and of a conviction that we need a Saviour.

Faith is the acceptance of God's mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. The grace of Faith, or the power of believing, is the gift of God; the act of Faith, or actual believing is the exercise of that power. When God presents His truth to us, it is not a matter of indifference whether we accept or reject it. He holds us accountable for the exercise of the

Faith which He has given us, by accepting Christ as a personal Saviour. "He that believeth not is condemned already."

By "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," the sinner experiences **Justification.** This is pardon, forgiveness, remission, absolution. By the atonement made upon Calvary the guilt of his sins is taken away, their legal penalties remitted, and his indebtedness canceled. "Jesus paid it all."

He experiences **conversion.** This implies a change of heart, and becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus.

He experiences **regeneration** — a new birth—a new life in his soul—a being "born again" of the Incorruptible Seed.

He experiences **adoption.** God takes him into His family for Christ's sake, and he becomes a son.

He experiences the **witness of the Spirit,** testifying with his spirit that he is a child, enabling him to cry Abba Father.

Now, as **Justification** is "that act of God's free grace in which He pardons our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight for the sake of Christ, so **sanctification** is that act of

divine grace whereby we are made holy."

"Holiness is sanctification in perpetuity. It implies heart purity, or freedom from sin. The term **sin** is used in the Bible, either in the sense of sin committed — an actual transgression in thought, word, or deed, or sin **indwelling,** that depravity of heart which leads to all sinful acts, that inward cause of which sins are the effects, that nature which we have by inheritance from our first parents in the fall. In the one sense, it is a voluntary violation of the divine law; in the other, it is an involuntary state of the heart; the one meaning implies guilt, the other uncleanness; the former requires pardon, the latter cleansing. The individual who is groaning under the burden of sins committed, wants to be forgiven; the one who is sensible of his indwelling corruption wants to be cleansed. One seeks justification, the other sanctification. Now, our definition of holiness is intended to apply to sin in both these aspects. It is freedom from the guilt of sin, freedom also from its power, from its dominion—nay, from its very existence. It is the privilege of souls that have first known their transgressions forgiven by faith in the atoning blood

of Jesus, and then their hearts cleansed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Their experience does not end with Calvary, but goes forward to Pentecost.

In the unregenerate man sin reigns; in the justified man sin is subjected; in the sanctified man sin is removed. The outward walk of the justified and of the sanctified should be precisely alike. The difference is within. I heartily endorse the terse expression of the Salvation Army, viz: "The unsaved is under sin. The justified is over sin. The sanctified is without sin."

II

God Requires His Children to be Holy

None that believe in the existence of God will deny that He is a holy Being. Absolute purity is one of His attributes. And in this He stands alone in the universe. Neither man nor angel can ever attain to the perfection of the Deity. But man was created in "the image of God"—a state of moral purity—a state of holiness and innocency—a state in which it was his delight to commune with God, and do His will—a state in which there was no tendency to sin although there was a susceptibility to temptation, and a liability to fall.

This purity and innocency being lost by disobedience, the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ contemplates nothing less than its restoration. In the fall our hearts are depraved—loving that which is evil—inclined to sin—corrupt, deceitful, "desperately wicked;" and we need, therefore, not only the pardon of our transgressions, but such a cleansing and purifying of our hearts that we may love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. He who does this is a holy man.

There are doubtless differences which need not detain us between the perfection of Adam before the fall, and the Christian perfection, which is the subject of this essay. These differences arise chiefly from the diseased and imperfect physical organization which now appertains to our race, and which did not appertain to Adam: in consequence of which, the mind, through its connection with such a body, is liable to false perceptions and erroneous judgments.

Mistakes in judgment will lead to mistakes in practice, even in the most holy person—and thus we conclude that, while it is the privilege and duty of the Christian to expect, in the fullness of Christ's Salvation, a complete deliverance from sin, and a

restoration into man's original condition so far as mortal purity is concerned; yet, in the present state of being, he must ever be subject to weaknesses, infirmities, and mistakes.

Beloved reader, answer not to me, but to thyself in the searching light of God's Holy Spirit, these questions. Having been forgiven, am I also holy? Has God's will in reference to me, even my sanctification, been accomplished? Does the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse ME from all sin? And if truth compels thee to give a negative answer to these inquiries, then ask thyself further, When does God command me to be holy? When am I to be sanctified and cleansed? Is it far in the future when I shall have grown in grace, developed and strengthened my Christian virtues, and become more worthy of this great salvation? Is it on a bed of death, or just as I am in the struggles of dissolution, that God wills my sanctification — will my graces and virtues sanctify me? God give thee grace, dear Christian reader, to answer No, no, no, none of these can sanctify me. It is Jesus that must sanctify me when I am dying. It is Jesus that must sanctify me at any time in the future. It is Jesus that can sanctify me NOW.

III

Prerequisites for the Attainment of Holiness

First, it is necessary for one who would become holy to believe that holiness is attainable. It is contrary to the nature of things that an individual should make a serious effort to do an act which he believes can not be done, or to attain a thing which he believes to be unattainable. The human mind is so constituted that it will not put forth a volition to accomplish a thing which it believes quite impossible; and so if a man rejects the doctrine of holiness—if he believes that there is no possibility of getting rid of sin in this life, if he thinks that, however heavy the burden, he must needs carry it to the end—that he can expect no deliverance till death comes to his relief—the result is, that, according to his faith, or want of faith, it shall be unto him. There is just one way of receiving not only holiness but every other gospel blessing as well, and that is by faith. "If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth."

But secondly, it is not only necessary that one who seeks holiness should believe in the attainability of

holiness, but also that he should earnestly and sincerely desire to be holy. He must be convicted for sanctification. He must be so enamored of holiness that he will determine to have it at whatever cost. He must be willing to sell all that he has that he may obtain the hidden treasure. Believing the doctrine already proved, that God is able and willing to make him holy, he must maintain a fixed, unalterable resolve, that with this Divine aid the unspeakable blessing shall be his own. It must be the constant petition of his inmost soul.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

IV

Of Consecration.

It is a confusion of terms to confound this with Sanctification. The consecrating act is our own; the sanctifying grace is from God. Consecration is necessary to sanctification, but not identical with it. Sanctification implies consecration, but it also implies more. The term consecration, as we here employ it, means simply the total surrender of ourselves to God—with a fixed purpose to abandon every known sin and to be wholly the Lord's. The grace that gives us the power to make such a

total surrender is from God, but the surrender itself is a voluntary act of our own. God recognizes our feeble human agency not withstanding the fact that this agency without his divine aid will be entirely unavailing. Every consecration made solely in our own strength, relying upon our good resolutions and our firmness of purpose alone, will be sure to result in failure. But it is necessary to bring into exercise all the strength of will we possess in the act of surrender, and then to rely upon God for ability to keep the covenant we have made with him. That is to say, we must do all we can, and every justified Christian certainly has the power to do something in this direction. When he came to Christ for pardon, he was dead in trespasses and sins, and could only surrender himself to be saved. But every forgiven soul is measurably quickened—there is some life in him — and it is to this class — justified Christians—that Paul addresses his admonition: "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

This act of consecration ought to be made deliberately and thoughtfully, with a full appreciation of our relations to God, and a just appreciation

tion of the fact that having wilfully wandered from him, and rebelled against him we have, through his mercy in Christ Jesus, been "bought with a price," and hence are emphatically "not our own." Consecration must not be a temporary thing, for a temporary purpose, but it must include the whole period of our existence, our whole time, and our whole eternity. Many Christians are willing to give up something to the Lord. Some are willing to give up much. But the consecration we are now considering requires us to give up all. It is true that our wants in this world are many; but "your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." We must trust ourselves wholly in His hands, with an entire willingness to be, to do, and to suffer whatever His sovereign will may ordain. (1.) We must contentedly be what He would make us—heralds of the gospel or doorkeepers of his house — missionaries abroad or feeders of the flock at home—anything, or, if such a thought were possible, nothing, in His church. (2.) We must do what He would have us do, and be just as ready to refrain from doing when He bids us—go or stay—speak or be silent—work or wait—

march or halt—fight in the field or rest in the camp, just as He may direct. (3.) We must suffer with resignation whatever He permits to come upon us—afflictions and temptations "if need be"—"fiery trials," if such be dispensed to us—loss of health, loss of friends, loss of property, loss of reputation, if He sees meet to deprive us of these blessings. Body, soul, and spirit—mind, will, affections —time, talents, possessions—all that we have, and all that we are, must be His—wholly, His, and His forever. If special tests of our obedience are required, let us not fail to accept them. Sometimes a very small thing is presented to the mind of a seeker after holiness, some act to be done or some indulgence to be surrendered, and because of its very insignificance he refuses to entertain the thought, and so misses the blessing. In other cases, perhaps some great thing or some intensely repulsive thing has been set before the mind as what would be required if a full consecration were made, and Satan has whispered you know you could NEVER endure that! and too often the soul that was on the point of entering into rest has been driven back into the wilderness for fear of these dreadful giants.

Oh, that Christians everywhere

would cease to distrust Christ—that they might realize that His "purposes are purposes of love"—that His plans concerning them are plans far more blessed than that they can devise for themselves, and that trusting Him fully is only casting themselves into the arms of a loving Saviour Who will not require any thing from them without giving them strength to perform it—Who will not allow any affliction to come upon them in which He is not afflicted—Who will not lead them along any thorny path without Himself treading it with them—Who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will always "make a way of escape that they may be able to bear it."

Such a consecration as we have been considering, made under the influence of the Holy Spirit, thoughtfully, unreservedly, irrevocably, and in reliance upon Divine assistance is necessary to the attainment of holiness; because we can not, with any show of reason, believe that God will bestow upon us that wondrous blessing, while we are living in a state of voluntary rebellion against Him. So long as we indulge any known sin, or omit any known duty, we can not have the faith to believe that God will

sanctify us wholly; and without faith it is just as impossible for the believer to be sanctified as for the sinner to be pardoned. Christians are often complaining, and doubtless with justice, of their own lack of faith. There are comparatively few who have a faith so clear and appropriating, as, in the language of the Saviour, to "remove mountains." And if our faith is dim and weak, is it not because our consecration is imperfect? Is it not because we are keeping back a part of the price? By retaining a little self-life in our hearts, are we not making it impossible that we should believe in God fully, and trust in Him confidingly, and obey Him implicitly? Absolute and unconditonal surrender to God is what we must submit to if we would have a faith that staggers not at the promises of God through unbelief.

But consecration is not synonymous with holiness, nor all that is requisite for the attainment of that blessed experience. Consecration is a voluntary act of our own, generally made in a formal and definite manner, often in express words, and by many in writing. By this act we surrender our all into the hands of God, and enter into covenant relations with Him. But the work of sanctification

is His, not ours, and so, after thus giving ourselves to Him, we are to rest in His promises; and

V

Ask in Faith to be Baptized with the Spirit and Sanctified Wholly.

It is Christ, not his own faith, nor repentance, nor prayer, that justifies the sinner — albeit the repentance, the faith, the prayer are all necessary to the bestowment of pardon by Him. It is Christ—not consecration, nor faith that sanctifies the believer—albeit consecration and faith are necessary to the bestowment of holiness by Him. Both the one and the other are needful. It is not sufficient to give all—we must also take all. It is not enough that we lay our offering, which includes ourselves and everything that pertains to us, on the altar. We must also believe that the offering is accepted, and that "the altar sanctifieth the gift." Such a consecration as we have described can not fail to find acceptance with God. The proof that it does so, does not lie in the fact of our believing, but in the veracity of God. Hear what He says: "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (consecration), "and I will re-

ceive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (acceptance). It is God's unchangeable and everlasting Truth revealed to us in His promises that determines the certainty of the result. We know that our consecration is accepted—not because of any preconceived feelings being realized—not because of any rapturous emotions, or any extraordinary visions, or exalted imaginations — but because God says so. But, notwithstanding the promises are yea and amen forever, we shall not realize them to be so to ourselves if we do not take the Promiser at His word. The Christian begins to live by faith. He continues to live by faith. He walks by faith. He receives every gospel blessing by faith. All his soul's needs are supplied by faith. He is justified by faith. He is sanctified by faith.

The blood of Jesus is the ground of our sanctification. Hence we are sanctified by the blood. The truth of God as revealed in Scripture is the channel through which the cleansing efficacy of the blood is brought through the Spirit in contact with our hearts. Hence we are sanctified by the truth. The Holy Spirit is the active and effective agent in this

purifying process. Hence we are sanctified by the Spirit. Our own faith is the instrumental means of receiving this wondrous blessing. Hence we are sanctified by faith.

This experience does not come to all in the same way, though its effects are alike precious in all. With some it is a pentecostal effusion—the rushing of a mighty wind—the whirlwind and the earthquake prostrating everything before it, causing its recipients to speak with new tongues,* and glorify God, whilst the multitude wonder or scoff. With others the blessing comes in moments of quiet calm, when all outward commotions have ceased, when the faculties of the soul are hushed, and restful, and expectant; and it comes as a "still small voice," whispering in the ear of the soul and diffusing a sweet and tranquil joy through the whole spiritual being. By this inward baptism the heart is cleansed — free from sin. In this spiritual baptism the believer receives, also, the "enduement of power." This is nothing else than a qualification for the work to which God calls him—power to impress men's minds and win their souls to Christ. This is totally distinct from and independent of learning or eloquence, and is sometimes exerted

without the consciousness of its possessor by his very looks and actions, strongly affecting beholders and betraying him that he has been with Jesus. It is a mysterious enduement, doubtless, but none the less real. Witness the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost under this wondrous baptism. "And the same day there was added unto them about three thousand souls." No man can receive Christ into his heart and have Him dwell there by faith, without an immense addition to this effective energy. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The baptism in one; but there may be many successive girdings and fillings according to God's free mercy and the believer's individual need, as well as the service to which he may be called. To the believer who has thus been sanctified, there is need no less than before of a constant abiding in Christ. In sanctifying a soul the Holy Spirit does not place it beyond the reach of danger nor beyond the possibility of sinning. To every one who is sanctified there comes a definite moment when he can say, "Jesus saves me—saves me now"—"the blood cleanseth—cleanseth now." If the same faith continues, when another moment comes he can still say,

without blemish!"

Such must be the Bride of Christ! —spotless, pure, arrayed in fine linen, which is the "righteousness of saints." When Zion shall indeed thus put on her beautiful garments—when the Church on earth shall awaken and put on Her strength, then She shall "arise, shine,"—then shall She "come up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Her Beloved, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, terrible as an army with banners." "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days."

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, One God over all blessed forever." Amen.

***Some one might question the statement of the writer: "Causing its recipients to speak with new tongues." It is clear he is speaking of the "experience" or "the blessing" as to its different manifestations: "With some ...." and "with others...," and not as a separate or additional experience as the tongues people teach.**