

SANCTIFICATION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT: INTERNAL

IN closing the last chapter I remarked that sanctification is both absolute and progressive. Absolute sanctification is by the one offering of Christ on the cross, and will be treated of further on. Progressive sanctification is looked at in two ways: it is by the Spirit and by the Word.

It may help some to put it in this way:

Sanctification by the Spirit is INTERNAL. It is an experience within the believer.

Sanctification by the blood of Christ is ETERNAL. It is *not* an experience; it is *positional*; it has to do with the new place in God's eternal favor occupied by every believer—an unchanging and unchangeable position, to which defilement can never attach, in God's estimation.

Sanctification by the word of God refers to the believer's outward walk and ways. It is the manifest result of sanctification by the Spirit, and goes on progressively all through life.

I desire to group together four scriptures which refer to the first important aspect above mentioned. Doctrinally, perhaps, I should take up sanctification by blood first; but experimentally the Spirit's work precedes the knowledge of the other.

In 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10 we read of a host of sinful characters who shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The 11th verse immediately adds, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but *ye are sanctified*, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God."

Again, in 2 Thess. 2: 13 we read, "But we are

bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth."

Closely linked with this is the second verse of the opening chapter of 1 Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

The fourth verse is Rom. 15: 16: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being *sanctified by the Holy Ghost*."

In all these passages it is of the utmost importance, in order to rightly apprehend the truth intended to be conveyed, to observe that sanctification by the Spirit is treated as the first beginnings of God's work in the souls of men, leading to the full knowledge of justification through faith in the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.

Far from being "the second blessing," subsequent to justification, it is a work apart from which none ever would be saved. That this may be made plain to the thoughtful reader, I purpose a careful analysis of each verse quoted.

The Corinthians had been characterized by the common sins of men. They had, like the Ephesians (chap. 2: 1-5), "walked according to the course of this age," lured on by that unholy "spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." But a great change had taken place in them. Old affections and desires had been superseded by new and

holy longings. The wicked life had been exchanged for one in which the pursuit after godliness was characteristic. What had wrought this change? Three expressions are used to convey the fulness of it. They had been "washed, sanctified, and justified"—and all "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Objective and subjective are here closely linked together. The work and character of the Lord Jesus had been presented as set forth in the gospel. He alone was the Saviour of sinners. But in the application of that salvation to men there is necessarily the subjective side. Men are unclean because of sin, and must be "washed." The "washing of water by the word" (of Eph. 5: 25, 26) is clearly alluded to. The word of God lays hold on the conscience, and men are awakened to see the folly and wickedness of their lives—away from God, and walking in darkness. This is the beginning of a moral washing that goes on all through the believer's life, and of which I hope to treat more fully later on.

But now, observe carefully—the same word of God comes to all men, but the same effect is not produced in all. Christ and His cross is preached to an audience of a hundred unconverted men. One remains, broken-hearted over his sins and seeking peace with God, while ninety and nine go away untouched. Why the difference? The Holy Spirit gives power to the Word, plowing up the conscience in the case of every one truly converted, and such a one is separated, set apart by a divine work within, from the indifferent multitude to which he once belonged. It is here that sanctifica-

tion of the Spirit applies. It may be some time ere he finds true peace with God; but he is never again a careless sinner. The Holy Spirit has laid hold of him for salvation. This is beautifully illustrated in the first few verses of our Bibles. The world created in perfection (see Isa. 45: 18) in verse 1, is described as fallen into a chaotic condition in verse 2. "Without form and void," and covered with a mantle of darkness: what a picture of fallen man away from God! His soul a moral chaos, his understanding darkened, his mind and conscience defiled, he is in very deed dead in trespasses and sins; "alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works." All this the ruined earth may well speak of.

But God is going to remake that world. It shall yet become a dwelling-place for man, a fit home for him during the ages of time. How does He go about it? The first great agent is the Spirit; the second, the Word. "The Spirit of God moved [or brooded] upon the waters." Hovering over that scene of desolation, the Holy Spirit brooded; and then the Word of power went forth. "God said, Let light be: and light was." And so in the salvation of fallen man—the Spirit and the Word must act. The brooding-time comes first. The Holy Spirit quickens through the message proclaimed. He awakens men, and gives them a desire to know Christ and to be delivered from sin's power and saved from its judgment. After this brooding season, or as a result of it, the heart is opened to the gospel in its fulness; and, being believed, the light shines in and the darkness is dissipated. "God,

who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6). Thus are we who believe no longer children of the night, nor of darkness, but of the day. We were once darkness: now we have become light in the Lord. But ere the shining forth of the light there was the Spirit's brooding. And this is the sanctification referred to in the four passages grouped together above. Notice the order in 2 Thess. 2: "Chosen to salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit"—the divine agency—"and belief of the truth"—the Word of life scattering the darkness and bringing in the light of the knowledge of salvation through the name of the Lord Jesus.

It is the same in 1 Peter. The saved are elect, but it is the sanctification of the Spirit that brings them *unto* the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. Now the knowledge of justification is mine when brought by the Spirit to the knowledge of the sprinkled blood of Jesus. It is faith apprehending that His precious blood cleanseth my soul from every stain, thus giving peace. By the Spirit I am brought to this, and to begin a life of obedience—to obey as Christ obeyed. This is the practical effect of the Spirit's sanctification.

But now it is of importance to realize that justification is not in itself a state. It is not a work in the soul, but a work done by Another for me, yet altogether outside of me, and utterly apart from my frames and feelings. In other words, it is my standing, not my experience.

The difference between the two may be illustrated thus: Two men are haled into court charged with the joint commission of a crime. After a full investigation, the judge on the bench justifies them both. They are free. One man, hearing the decision, is filled with delight. He had feared an opposite verdict, and dreaded the consequences. But now he is happy, because he knows he is cleared. The other man was even more anxious and gloomy. So occupied is he with his troubled thoughts that he does not fully catch the declaration of the court, "Not guilty." He hears only the last word, and he is filled with dismay. He sees a loathsome prison rising before him, yet he knows he is innocent. He gives utterance to words of despair until with difficulty made to comprehend the true status of the case, when he too is filled with joy.

Now what had the actual justification of either man to do with his state, or experience? The one who heard and believed was happy. The one who misapprehended the decision was miserable; yet both were alike justified. Justification was not a work wrought *in* them. It was the judge's sentence in their favor. And this is ever what justification is, whether used in the Bible or in matters of every-day life. God justifies, or clears, the ungodly when they believe in the Lord Jesus who bore their condemnation on the cross. To condemn found this judicial act with the state of soul of the believer is only confusion.

"But," says one, "I do not *feel* justified!" Justification has nothing to do with feeling. The question is, Do you believe God is satisfied with

His beloved Son as your substitute upon the cross, and do you receive Jesus as your substitute—your personal Saviour? If so, God says you are justified; and there is an end to it. He will not call back His words. Believing the gospel declaration, the soul has peace with God. Walking with God, there is joy and gladness, and victory over sin in a practical sense. But this is *state*, not standing.

The Holy Spirit who quickens and sanctifies at the beginning, leading to the knowledge of justification through faith in what God has said about the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ, abides now in every believer, to be the power for the new life, and thus for practical sanctification day by day.

In this way the offering-up of the Gentiles—poor aliens, heathen of all descriptions, strangers to the covenants of promise—is made acceptable to God, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. He accompanies the preaching—the ministry of reconciliation—opening the heart to the truth, convincing of sin, of righteousness and judgment, and leading to personal faith in the Son of God.

I think it must now be plain to any who have carefully followed me thus far that in this aspect at least sanctification is wrongly designated as a “second blessing.” It is, on the contrary, the beginning of the work of the Spirit in the soul, and goes on throughout the believer’s life, reaching its consummation at the coming of the Lord, when the saved one, in his glorified, sinless body, will be presented faultless in the presence of God. And so Peter, after telling the Christians to whom he writes that they are sanctified by the Spirit, very properly

proceeds to exhort them to be holy because He who has saved them is holy, and they are set to represent Him in this world.

So too Paul, after affirming the sanctification of the Thessalonians, yet prays that they may be sanctified wholly, which would be an absurdity if this were accomplished when first sanctified by the Spirit. “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5: 23, 24). There is no room for doubt as to the final result. Sanctification is God’s work; and “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever” (Eccl. 3: 14). “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1: 6).

When asked for scripture as to the term “the second blessing,” the perfectionist will generally refer you to 2 Cor. 1: 15. There Paul writes to the Corinthians (who, as declared several times over in his first epistle, were sanctified), and says, “In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit.” The margin reads, “a second blessing.” From this simple expression, an amazing system has been deduced. It is taught that as a result of Paul’s first visit to Corinth many had been justified. But as the carnal mind remained in them, they manifested it in various ways, for which he rebukes them in his first letter. Now he longs to get to them again, this time not so much to preach the gospel as to

have some "holiness meetings," and get them sanctified!

An ingenious theory surely! but it all falls to the ground when the student of Scripture observes that the carnal saints of the 1st epistle were sanctified in Christ Jesus (chap. 1: 2); had received the Spirit of God (chap. 2: 12); were indwelt by that Spirit (chap. 3: 16); and, as we have already noticed at some length, were "washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (chap. 6).

What then was the second blessing Paul desired for them? To begin with, it was not *the* second blessing at all, but *a* second blessing. They had been blessed by his ministry among them on the first occasion, as they learned from his lips and saw manifested in his ways the truth of God. Like any true-hearted under-shepherd, he longs to visit them again, once more to minister among them, that they may receive blessing, or benefit, a second time. What could be simpler, if the mind were not confused by faulty teaching, leading to one's reading his thoughts into Scripture, instead of learning from it?

From the moment of their conversion, believers are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and the Spirit is given to lead us into the good that is already ours. "All things are yours" was written, not to persons perfect in their ways, but to the very Corinthians whom we have been considering, and that before they received, through the apostle Paul, a second benefit.

SANCTIFICATION BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST: ETERNAL

THE great theme of the epistle to the Hebrews is that aspect of sanctification which has been designated positional, or absolute; not now a work wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, but the glorious result of that wondrous work accomplished by the Son of God when He offered up Himself to put away sin upon the cross of Calvary. By virtue of that sacrifice the believer is forever set apart to God, his conscience purged, and he himself transformed from an unclean sinner into a holy worshiper, linked up in an abiding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ; for "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2: 11). According to 1 Cor. 1: 30, they are "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . sanctification." They are "accepted in the Beloved." God sees them in Him, and looks at them as He looks at His Son. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17). This is not our state. No believer has ever been wholly like the Lord Jesus in a practical way. The highest and best experience would not reach up to this. But as to our standing (our new position), we are reckoned by God to be "as He is."

The basis of all this is the blood-shedding and blood-sprinkling of our Saviour. "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13: 12). By no

other means could we be purged from our sins and set apart to God.

The main argument of the epistle is very fully developed in chapters 8 to 10, inclusive. There the two covenants are contrasted. The old covenant asked of man what it never got—that is perfect obedience; because it was not in man to give it. The new covenant guarantees all blessing through the work of Another; and from the knowledge of this springs the desire to obey on the part of the object of such grace.

In the old dispensation there was a sanctuary of an earthly order; and connected with it were ordinances of a carnal character, which nevertheless foreshadowed good things to come—the very blessings we are now privileged to enter into the enjoyment of.

But in the tabernacle God had shut Himself away from sinful man, and He dwelt in the holiest of all. Man was shut out. Once only every year a representative man, the high priest, went in to God, "but not without blood." Every great day of atonement the same ritual service was performed; but all the sacrifices offered under the law could not put away one sin, or "make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience."

The perfection of Hebrews, let it be noted, is not perfection of character or of experience, but perfection as to the *conscience*. That is, the great question taken up is, How can a polluted sinner, with a defiled conscience, procure a conscience that no longer accuses him, but now permits him unhesitatingly to approach God? The blood of bulls and

of goats cannot effect this. Legal works cannot procure so precious a boon. The proof of it is manifest in Israel's history, for the continual sacrifices proved that no sacrifice sufficient to purge the conscience had yet been offered. "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (chap. 10: 2).

How little do holiness professors enter into words like these! "Once purged!" "No more conscience of sins!" What do such expressions mean? Something, dear reader, which, if but grasped by Christians generally, would free them from all their questionings, doubts, and fears.

The legal sacrifices were not great enough in value to atone for sin. This having been fully attested, Christ Himself came to do the will of God, as it was written in the volume of the book. Doing that will meant for Him going down into death and pouring out His blood for our salvation: "By the which will we *are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (10: 10). Observe, then, that our sanctification and His one offering stand or fall together. We believe the record, and God declares "we are sanctified." There is no growth, no progress, and certainly no second work, in this. It is a great *fact*, true of all Christians. And this sanctification is eternal in character, because our great Priest's work is done perfectly, and is never to be repeated, as the following verses insist: "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (ver. 14). Could words be plainer or language

more expressive? He who doubts shows himself either unwilling or afraid to rest on so startling a truth!

That *one* true sacrifice effectually purges the conscience once for all, so that the intelligent believer can now rejoice in the assurance that he is forever cleansed from his guilt and defilement by the blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ. Thus, and thus only, the sanctified are perfected forever, as regards the conscience.

A simple illustration may help any who still have difficulty as to this expression, peculiar to Hebrews, "a purged conscience." A man is in debt to another who has again and again demanded payment. Being unable to pay, and that because he has unwisely wasted his substance, and this known to his creditor, he becomes unhappy when in the latter's presence. A desire to avoid him springs up and takes control of him. His conscience is uneasy and defiled. He knows well he is blameworthy, yet he is incapable of righting matters. But another appears, who, on the debtor's behalf, settles the claim in the fullest manner, and hands to the troubled one a receipt for all. Is he now afraid to meet the other? Does he shrink from facing him? Not at all; and why? Because he has now a perfect, or a purged, conscience in regard to the matter that once exercised him.

It is thus that the work of the Lord Jesus has met all God's righteous claims against the sinner; and the believer, resting upon the divine testimony as to the value of that work, is purged by the blood of Christ and "perfected forever" in the sight of

the Holy One. He is sanctified by that blood, and that for eternity.

Having been turned from the power of Satan unto God, he has the forgiveness of sins, and is assured of an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus (Acts 26: 18).

But there is an expression used farther on in the chapter that may still perplex and bewilder those who have not apprehended that profession is one thing, and possession another. In order to be clear as to this, it will be necessary to examine the whole passage, which I therefore quote in full, italicizing the expression referred to. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and *hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified*, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (vers. 26-29).

In what we have already gone over we have seen that he who is sanctified by the one offering of Christ upon the cross, that is, by His precious blood, is perfected forever. But in this passage it is equally plain that one who counts the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, shall be forever lost. In order not to miss the true force of this for our souls, it is nec-

essary that we give some attention to what we have already designated "positional sanctification." Of old all the people of Israel, and all who were associated with them, were set apart to God both on the night of the passover and afterwards in the wilderness. But this did not necessarily imply a work of the Spirit in their souls. Many were doubtless in the blood-sprinkled houses that solemn night, when the destroying angel passed through to smite the unsheltered first-born, who had no real faith in God. Yet they were by the blood of the Lamb put in a place of blessing, a position where they shared in many hallowed privileges. So afterward with those who were under the cloud and passed through the sea, being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All were in the same position. All shared the same outward blessings. But the wilderness was the place of testing, and soon proved who were real and who were not.

At the present time God has no special nation, to be allied to which is to come into a position of outward nearness to Him. But He has a people who have been redeemed to Himself out of all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations, by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. All who ally themselves by profession with that company are outwardly among the blood-sheltered: in this sense they are sanctified by the blood of the covenant. That blood stands for Christianity, which in its very essence is the proclamation of salvation through Christ's atoning death. To take the Christian place therefore is like entering the blood-sprinkled house. All who are real, who have judged themselves be-

fore God, and truly confided in His grace, will remain in that house. If any go out, it proves their unreality, and such can find no other sacrifice for sins; for all the typical offerings are done away in Christ. These are they of whom the apostle John speaks so solemnly: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would* have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2: 19). These unreal ones were positionally sanctified; but as they were ever bereft of faith in the soul, they "went out," and thus did despite to the Spirit of grace, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing. These sin wilfully, not in the sense of failing to walk uprightly merely, but as utterly abjuring, or apostatizing from, Christianity, after having become conversant with the glorious message it brings to lost men.

But where it is otherwise, and the soul is really resting on Christ, positional sanctification becomes eternal: because the sanctified and the Sanctifier are, as we have seen, linked up together by an indissoluble bond. Christ Himself is made unto them wisdom, and this in a threefold way: He is their righteousness, their sanctification, and their redemption.

Here is holiness! Here is an unassailable righteousness! Here is acceptance with God. "Ye are

* The italicized addition, "no doubt," is superfluous. The passage is complete without it. It is a positive statement, and admits of no exception.

complete in Him," though daily needing to humble oneself because of failure. It is not my practical sanctification that gives me title to a place among the saints in light. It is the glorious fact that Christ has died and redeemed me to God. His blood has cleansed me from all, or every, sin; and I now have life in Him, a new life, with which guilt can never be connected. I am in Him that is true. He is my sanctification, and represents me before God, even as of old the high priest bore upon his mitre the words "Holiness unto the Lord," and upon his shoulders and his heart the names of all the tribes of Israel. He represented them all in the holy place. He was typically their sanctification. If he was accepted of God, so were they. The people were seen in the priest.

And of our ever-living High Priest we may well sing:

"For us He wears the mitre
Where holiness shines bright;
For us His robes are whiter
Than heaven's unsullied light."

That there should be a life of corresponding devotedness and separation to God on our part no Spirit-taught believer will for a moment deny, as we will now consider.

SANCTIFICATION BY THE WORD OF GOD: EXTERNAL RESULTS

IN His great high-priestly prayer of the 17th of John, our Lord says of the men given to Him by the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (vers. 16-19). This precious passage may well introduce for us the subject of practical sanctification--the ordering aright of our external ways, and bringing all into accord with the revealed will of God.

At the outset we shall do well if we get it fixed in our mind that this is very closely related to that sanctification of the Spirit to which our attention has already been directed. The Spirit works within us. The Word, which is without us, is nevertheless the medium used to do the work within. But I have purposely dwelt separately upon the two aspects in order to bring the clearer before our minds the distinction between the Spirit's sanctification in us, which is the very beginning of God's work in our souls, and the application of the Word thereafter to our outward ways. New birth is our introduction into God's family; but although born again, we may be dark as to many things, and need the light of the Word to clear our bewildered minds. But through the sanctification of the Spirit