

THREEFOLD SANCTIFICATION

NO. 434

A SERMON
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“Sanctified by God the Father.”—Jude 1:1
“Sanctified in Christ Jesus.”—1 Corinthians 1:2
“Through sanctification of the Spirit.”—1 Peter 1:2

MARK, beloved, the union of the Three Divine Persons in all their gracious acts. We believe that there is one God, and although we rejoice to recognize the Trinity, yet it is ever most distinctly a Trinity *in Unity*. Our watchword still is—“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” How unwisely do those young believers talk, who make preferences in the Persons of the Trinity, who think of Christ as if He were the embodiment of everything that is lovely and gracious, while the Father they regard as severely just, but destitute of kindness. And how foolish are those who magnify the decree of the Father, or the atonement of the Son, so as to depreciate the work of the Spirit.

In deeds of grace none of the Persons of the Trinity act apart from the rest. They are as united in their deeds as in their essence. In their love towards the chosen they are one, and in the actions which flow from that great central source they are still undivided.

Especially I would have you notice this in the case of sanctification. While we may without the slightest mistake speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, yet we must take heed that we do not view it as if the Father and the Son had no part therein. It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Spirit, and of the Son. Still does JEHOVAH say, “Let *us* make man in our own image after our likeness,” and thus we are “*his* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

My brethren, I beg you to notice and carefully consider the value which God sets upon real holiness, since the Three Persons are represented as co-working to produce a church without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Those men who despise holiness of heart are in direct conflict with God. Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God builds up His living temple.

We read in Scripture of the “beauties of holiness,” nothing is beautiful before God but that which is holy. All the glory of Lucifer, that son of the morning, could not screen him from divine abhorrence when he had defiled himself by sin. “Holy, Holy, Holy”—the continual cry of cherubim—is the loftiest song that creature can offer, and the noblest that the Divine Being can accept.

See then, He counts holiness to be His choice treasure. It is as the seal upon His heart, and as the signet upon His right hand. He could as soon cease to be as cease to be holy, and sooner renounce the sovereignty of the world than tolerate anything in His presence contrary to purity, righteousness, and holiness.

I pray you, you who profess to be followers of Christ, set a high value upon purity of life and godliness of conversation. Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope, but never speak disparagingly of the work of the Spirit which is your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, yea, rather, prize it, prize it so heartily that you dread the very appearance of evil. Prize it so that in your most ordinary actions you may be, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

My design was to have entered at large upon the doctrine of sanctification this morning. I intended to use the word “sanctification” in the mode in which it is understood among theologians, for you must know that the term “sanctification” has a far narrower meaning in bodies of divinity than it has in

Scripture. But in studying the subject I found myself lost in its ever widening extent, so that I concluded to attempt less in the hope of efficiently doing more.

On some future occasion we will enter at length into the Spirit's work, but now I only call attention to the fact that sanctification is treated in Scripture in various ways. I think we may do some service in illuminating the understanding of believers, if we shall this morning draw their attention not to the theological but to the Scriptural uses of the term "sanctification," and show that, in God's holy Word, it has a much wider meaning than is accorded to it by systematic divines.

It has been well said that the book of God, like the works of God, is not systematically arranged. How different is the freedom of nature from the orderly precision of the scientific museum! If you visit the British Museum you see all the animals there placed in cases according to their respective orders. You go into God's world and find dog and sheep, horse and cow, lion and vulture, elephant and ostrich, roaming abroad as if no zoology had ever ventured to arrange them in classes. The various rocks are not laid in order as the geologist draws them in his books, nor are the stars marked off according to their magnitudes.

The order of nature is variety. Science does but arrange and classify, so as to assist the memory. So systematic divines, when they come to deal with God's Word, find Scriptural truths put, not in order for the classroom, but for common life. The systematic divine is as useful as the analytical chemist, or the anatomist, but still the Bible is not arranged as a body of divinity.

It is a handbook to heaven. It is a guide to eternity, meant for the man at the plough, as much as for the scholar at his table. It is a primer for babes, as well as a classic for sages. It is the humble, ignorant man's book, and though there are depths in it in which the elephant may swim, yet there are shallows where the lamb may wade.

We bless God that He has not given us a body of divinity in which we might lose ourselves, but that He has given us His own Word, put into the very best practical form for our daily use and edification.

It is a recognized truth among us, that the Old Testament very often helps us to understand the New, while the New also expounds the Old. With God's Word self-interpretation is the best. "Diamond cut diamond" is a rule with a goldsmith, so must it be with a Scriptural student. They who would know best God's Word must study it in its own light.

I. Now, in the Old Testament we find the word "sanctify" very frequently indeed, and it is used there in three senses. Let me call your attention to the *first* one. The word "sanctify" in the Old Testament frequently has the meaning of *setting apart*.

It means the taking of something which was common before, which might legitimately have been put to ordinary uses, and setting it apart for God's service alone. It was then called sanctified or holy.

Take for instance, the passage in the thirteenth chapter of Exodus at the second verse. "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn." On account of the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt, God claimed the firstborn of men and the firstborn of cattle to be His. The tribe of Levi was set apart to be the representatives of the firstborn, to stand before the Lord to minister day and night in His tabernacle and in His temple, hence those who were thus set apart to be priests and Levites were said to be sanctified.

There is an earlier use of the term in the second chapter of Genesis, at the third verse. It is said, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." It had been an ordinary portion of time before, but He set it apart for His own service, that on the seventh day man should do no work for himself, but rest and serve his Maker.

So in Leviticus 27:14, you read, "And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the LORD," etc., which was meant as a direction to devout Jews who set apart a house or field to be God's, intending that either the produce of the field or the occupation of the house should be wholly given either to God's priests or Levites, or in some other way set apart to holy uses.

Now, nothing was done to the house, there were no ceremonies, we do not read that it was cleansed or washed or sprinkled with blood, but the mere fact that it was set apart for God was considered to be a sanctification. So in the most notable of instances in the book of Exodus 29:44, we read that God said, "I

will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar,” by which plainly enough was meant that He would set it apart to be His house, the special place of His abode, where between the wings of the cherubim the bright light of the Shekinah might shine forth, the glorious evidence that the Lord God dwelt in the midst of His people.

To the same effect are such as the following. The sanctification of the altar, instruments and vessels, in Numbers 7:1, the setting apart of Eleazer the son of Abinadab, to keep the ark of the Lord while it was at Kirjathjearim, 1 Samuel 7:1, and the establishment of cities of refuge in Joshua 20:7, where in the original we find that the word rendered “appointed” is the same which elsewhere is translated “sanctified.” It plainly appears from the Old Testament that the word “sanctify” sometimes has the meaning simply and only of setting apart for holy uses.

This explains a text in John 10:36, “Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” Jesus Christ there speaks of Himself as “sanctified” by His Father. Now He was not purged from sin, for He had none. Immaculately conceived, gloriously preserved from all touch or stain of evil, He needed no sanctifying work of the Spirit within Him to purge Him from dross or corruption. All that is here intended is that He was set apart.

So in that notable and well known passage in John 17:19, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth,” by which, again, He meant only that He gave up Himself specially to God’s service, to be occupied only with His Father’s business. He could say, “It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.”

Brethren, you understand now the text in Jude, “Sanctified by God the Father.” Surely it means that God the Father has specially set apart His people or sanctified them. Not that God the Father works operatively in the believer’s heart, although Paul tells us it is God that worketh in us to will and to do—that belongs immediately and effectively to the Holy Spirit—but He in the decree of election separated unto Himself a people who were to be sanctified to Himself forever and ever. He by the gift of His Son for them redeemed them from among men that they might be holy, and He by continually sending forth the Spirit fulfils His divine purpose that they should be a separate people sanctified from all the rest of mankind.

In this sense every Christian is perfectly sanctified already. We may speak of believers as those who are sanctified by God the Father, that is to say, they are set apart. They were set apart before they were created, they were legally set apart by the purchase of Christ, they are manifestly and visibly set apart by the effectual calling of the Spirit of grace. They are, I say, in this sense at all periods sanctified, and speaking of the work as it concerns God the Father, they are completely sanctified unto the Lord forever.

Is not this doctrine clear enough to you all? Leave the doctrine a moment, and let us look at it practically. Brothers and sisters, have we ever realized this truth as we ought to do? When a vessel, cup, altar, or instrument was set apart for divine worship, it was never used for common purposes again. No man but the priest might drink out of the golden cup, the altar might not be trifled with. God’s brazen laver was not for ordinary ablution, even the tongs upon the altar and the snuffers for the lamps were never to be profaned for any common purpose whatsoever. What a suggestive and solemn fact is this! If you and I are sanctified by God the Father, we ought never to be used for any purpose but for God.

“What?” say you, “Not for ourselves?” My brethren, not for ourselves. You are not your own, you are bought with a price. “But must we not work and earn our own bread?” Verily you must, but still not with that as your object. You must still be “diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

Remember, if you be servants, you are to serve not with eye service as men pleasers, but serving the Lord. If any man shall say “I have an occupation in which I cannot serve the Lord,” leave it, you have no right in it, but I think there is no calling in which man can be found, certainly no lawful calling, in which he may not be able to say, “Whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I do all to the glory of God.”

The Christian is no more a common man than was the altar a common place. It is as great a sacrilege for the believer to live unto himself, or to live unto the world, as though you and I could have profaned the most holy place, used the holy fire for our own kitchen, or the censer for common perfume, or the

candlestick for our own chamber. These things were God's, none might venture to appropriate them, and we are God's and must be used only for Him.

Oh, Christians, would that you could know this! You are Christ's men, God's men, servants of God through Jesus Christ. You are not to do your own works, you are not to live for your own objects. You are to say at all times, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus," you are practically to take this for your motto, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I fear nine out of ten professing Christians have never recognized this fact. They think if they were to devote a part of their substance that would do, or a part of their time will suffice.

Oh! Christ did not buy a part of you, men and brethren, Jesus Christ did not purchase a part of you! He bought you entire, body, soul, and spirit, and He must have you, the whole man. Oh, if you are to be partly saved by Him and partly by yourselves, then live to yourselves, but if God has wholly set you apart to be vessels of mercy fitted for His use, do not rob the Lord, treat not as common cups those things which are as the bowls of the altar.

There is another practical thought here. It was a crime which brought destruction upon Babylon when Belshazzar in his drunken frolic cried, "Bring forth the cups of the LORD, the goodly spoil of the temple at Jerusalem." They brought the golden candlestick and there it stood flaming high in the midst of the marble hall. The despot, surrounded by his wives and his concubines, filled high the bowl with the foaming draught, and bidding them pass round the cups of JEHOVAH, the heathen, the worshippers of idols, drank confusion to the God of heaven and earth.

In that moment, just as the sacred vessel touched the sacrilegious lip, a hand was seen mysteriously writing out his doom, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This was the crime which filled up the ephah of his sin. Now was the measure of his iniquity fully accomplished. He had used for lascivious and drunken purposes vessels which belonged to JEHOVAH, the God of the whole earth.

Oh, take heed, take heed, you that profess to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant, that you reckon it not to be an unholy thing. See to it that you make not your bodies which you profess to be set apart to God's service, slaves of sin, or your members servants of iniquity unto iniquity, lest, O you professors, you should hear in that hour the voice of the recording angel as he cries, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Be you clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord, and you beloved who hope that you are Christ's, and have a humble faith in Him this morning, see that you walk circumspectly, that by no means you prostitute to the service of sin that which was set apart in the eternal covenant of grace to be God's alone.

If you and I are tempted to sin, we must reply, "No! let another man do that, but I cannot, I am God's. I am set apart for Him, 'How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'" Let dedication enforce sanctification. Think of the dignity to which God has called you—JEHOVAH's vessels, set apart for the Master's use. Far hence be everything which would make you impure.

When Antiochus Epiphanes offered a sow on the altar of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, his awful death might have been easily foretold. Oh! how many there are who make a high profession who have offered unclean flesh upon the altars of God, have made religion a stalking-horse to their own emolument, and espoused the faith to gain esteem and applause among men!

What saith the Lord concerning such? "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord"—Heb 10:30. Their god was their belly, they gloried in their shame, they minded earthly things, and they die justly accursed. Spots are they in your solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. But you beloved, be not carried away with the error of the wicked, but keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

II. Secondly, in the Old Testament, the word "sanctify" is now and then used in another sense, one which I do not perceive to be hinted at in our Biblical Cyclopedias, but which is needed to make the subject complete. The word "sanctify" is used, not only to signify that the thing is set apart for holy uses, *but that it is to be regarded, treated, and declared as a holy thing.*

To give you an instance, there is a passage in Isaiah 8:13, which is to the point, when it is said—“Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself.” You clearly perceive that the Lord does not need to be set apart for holy uses, and again, that the Lord of hosts needs not to be purified, for He is Holiness itself. It means adore and reverence the Lord, with fear and trembling approach His throne, regard Him as the Holy One of Israel.

But let me give you other instances. When Nadab and Abihu, as recorded in the tenth of Leviticus, offered sacrifice to God and put strange fire on the altar, the fire of the Lord went forth and consumed them, and this was the reason given—“I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,” by which He did not mean that He would be set apart, nor that He would be made holy by purification, but that He would be treated and regarded as a most Holy Being with whom such liberties were not to be taken.

And again in Numbers 20:12, on that unfortunate occasion when Moses lost his temper and smote the rock twice, saying, “Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?” The Lord said that he should see the promised land, but should never enter it, the reason being, “Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel,” by which He meant that they had not so acted as to honor God’s name among the people.

A yet more familiar instance occurs in what is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer,” “Our Father which art in heaven, sanctified be thy name.” The word “hallowed” is simply an English variation, the Greek is “*sanctified* be Your name.” Now we know that God’s name does not need purifying, or setting apart, so that the sense here can only be “Let Thy name be revered and adored throughout the whole earth, and let men regard it as being a sacred and holy thing.”

My beloved brethren, have we not some light here concerning our second text—“Sanctified in Christ Jesus.” If the word “sanctified” may mean “regarded as holy and treated as such,” can you not see how in Christ Jesus the saints are regarded by God as being holy, and treated as such? Mark, we do not lay that down as being the only meaning of the text, for we shall have to show that another sense may be attached to it.

There have been certain brethren who have enlarged upon our being sanctified in Christ, and have almost forgotten the work of the Spirit. Now, if they only speak of our being sanctified in Christ, in the sense of being treated as holy, in fact as being justified, we have no quarrel with them, but if they deny the work of the Spirit, they are guilty of deadly error.

I have sometimes heard the term used, “Imputed sanctification,” which is sheer absurdity. You cannot even use the term, “Imputed justification.” “Imputed righteousness” is correct enough, and implies a glorious doctrine, but justification is not imputed, it is actually conferred. We are justified through the imputed righteousness of Christ, but as to being imputedly sanctified, no one who understands the use of language can so speak. The term is inaccurate and unscriptural.

I know it is said that the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, but this sanctification is not by imputation, nor does the text say so. Why, you might as readily prove imputed wisdom, or imputed redemption by this text, as force it to teach imputed sanctification.

It is a fact that for the sake of what Jesus Christ did, God’s people, though in themselves but partially sanctified as being yet subject to sin, are for Christ’s sake treated and regarded as if they were perfectly holy. But this, according to theological definitions is rather justification than sanctification, it must however be admitted that the Scripture sometimes uses the word “sanctification” in such a manner as to make it tantamount to justification. This however, we can clearly see, that God’s people have access with boldness to the Lord, because they are regarded through Christ as though they were perfectly holy.

Oh! brethren, think of this for a moment. A holy God cannot have dealings with unholy men. A holy God—and is not Christ Jesus God?—cannot have communion with unholiness, and yet you and I are unholy. How then does Christ receive us to His bosom? How does His Father walk with us and find Himself agreed? Because He views us, not in ourselves, but in our great federal Head, the Second Adam. He looks at us,

*“Not as we were in Adam’s fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as we’ll stand another day,
Fairer than sun’s meridian ray.”*

He looks on the deeds of Christ as ours, on His perfect obedience and sinless life as ours, and thus we may sing in the language of Hart—

*“With Thy spotless garments on,
Holy as the Holy One.”*

We may boldly enter into that which is within the veil, where no unholy thing may come, yet where we may venture because God views us as holy in Christ Jesus. This is a great and precious doctrine, but still, since the use of the term “sanctification ” in any other sense than that in which it is commonly employed as meaning the work of the Spirit, tends to foster confused notions, and really does I fear lead some to despise the work of the Spirit of God, I think it is better in ordinary conversation between Christians, for them to speak of sanctification without confounding it with what is quite a distinct act, namely, justification through the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Yet, if we hear a brother so talk, we must not be too severe upon him, as though he assuredly erred from the faith, for in Scripture, the terms “sanctification” and “justification” are frequently used interchangeably, and Christ’s righteousness made the subject matter of both works of grace.

III. We now come to the usual sense in which the word “sanctification” is employed. It means *actually to purify or make holy*, not merely to set apart nor to account holy, but to make really and actually so in nature.

You have the word in this sense in many places in the Old Testament. You will find it in Exodus 19:10-12. On the third day God was about to proclaim on the top of Sinai His holy law, and the mandate went forth, “Sanctify the people today and tomorrow,” which sanctification consisted in certain outward deeds by which their bodies and clothes were put into a cleanly state and their souls were brought into a reverential state of awe.

In the third of Joshua you find when the children of Israel were about to pass the Jordan, it was said, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” They were to prepare themselves to be beholders of a scene so august, when Jordan was driven back, and the river was utterly dried up before the feet of the priests of God. There was in this case an actual purification.

Men in the old times were sprinkled with blood, and thus sanctified from defilement and considered to be pure in the sight of God. Now this is the sense in which we view our third text, “Sanctification through the Spirit,” and this, I repeat, is the general sense in which we understand it in common conversation among Christians.

Sanctification begins in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man the new principle called the spirit, which is a third and higher nature, so that the believing man becomes body, soul, *and spirit*, and in this he is distinct and distinguished from all other men of the race of Adam. This work, which begins in regeneration, is carried on in two ways, by vivification and by mortification, that is, by giving life to that which is good, and by sending death to that which is evil in the man—mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under, and vivification, by which the life which God has put within us is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

This is carried on every day in what we call perseverance, by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God, and it culminates or comes to perfection, in “glory,” when the soul being thoroughly purged is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Now, this work, though we commonly speak of it as being the work of the Spirit, is quite as much the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as of the Spirit. In looking for texts on the subject, I have been struck

with the fact that where I found one verse speaking of it as the Spirit's work, I found another in which it was treated as the work of Jesus Christ.

I can well understand that my second text, "Sanctified in Christ Jesus," has as great a fullness of meaning as the third, "Sanctification through the Spirit." Lend me your attention. I fear that not many of you will be interested, except those of you who have a share in this precious work, others may think the subject too dry for them. Oh that they may yet know how precious to a believer is the purifying work of sanctification!

Sanctification is a work *in* us, not a work *for* us. It is a work in us, and there are two agents, one is the worker who works this sanctification effectually—that is the Spirit, and the other, the agent, the efficacious means by which the Spirit works this sanctification is—Jesus Christ and His most precious blood.

Suppose, to put it as plainly as we can, there is a garment which needs to be washed. Here is a person to wash it, and there is a bath in which it is to be washed—the person is the Holy Spirit, but the bath is the precious blood of Christ. It is strictly correct to speak of the person cleansing as being the sanctifier, it is quite as accurate to speak of that which is in the bath and which makes it clean as being the sanctifier too.

Now, the Spirit of God sanctifies us, He works it effectively, but He sanctifies us through the blood of Christ, through the water which flowed with the blood from Christ's side. To repeat my illustration, here is a garment which is black, a fuller in order to make it white uses niter and soap, both the fuller and the soap are cleansers, so both the Holy Spirit and the atonement of Christ are sanctifiers. I think that will be plain enough.

Let us enlarge upon the doctrine. The Spirit of God is the great worker by whom we are cleansed. I shall not, this morning, quote the texts. Most of you have the "Baptist Confession of Faith," and the "Catechism," which are generally distributed among the families of our church. They will furnish you with abundance of texts on that subject, for this is a doctrine which is generally received among us—that it is the Spirit of God who creates in us a new heart and a right spirit, according to the tenor of the covenant—"A new heart will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall walk in my ways."

He renews and changes the nature—turns the bias of the will—makes us seek after that which is good and right, so that every good thing in us may be described as "the fruit of the Spirit," and all our virtues and all our graces are efficiently worked in us by the Spirit of the living God. Never, I pray you, brethren, never, never forget this.

Oh, it will be an ill day for any church when the members begin to think lightly of the work of the Holy Spirit within us! We delight to magnify the work of Christ *for* us, but we must not depreciate the work of the blessed Spirit *in* us.

In the days of my venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, who was in the opinion even of ultra-Calvinists, sound to the core, this pernicious evil broke out in our church. There were some who believed in what was called "Imputed Sanctification," and denied the work of the blessed Spirit.

I was reading last night in our old church book, a note written there in the doctor's own handwriting, as the deliberate opinion of this church—"Agreed: That to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of grace and holiness worked in the heart, or as consisting of grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work, and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of grace, and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations, and snares, and be performed by the Author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints' meetness for eternal glory, is a grievous error, which highly reflects dishonor on the blessed Spirit, and His operations of grace on the heart, is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness, and renders persons unfit for church communion. Wherefore, it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this church, and should any such who are members of it appear to have received it and continued in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it."

Two members then present declaring themselves to be of the opinion condemned in the above resolution, and also a third person who was absent, but who was well known to have been under this awful delusion, were consequently excluded that evening. Nay, more, a person of another church who held the opinion thus condemned, was forbidden to commune at the table, and his pastor at Kettering was written to upon the subject, warning him not to allow so great an errorist to remain in fellowship.

So that the doctor thought the error to be so deadly, that he used the pruning knife at once, he did not stop till it spread, but he cut off the very twigs, and this is one of the benefits of church discipline when we are enabled to carry it out under God, that it does nip error in the very bud, and thus those who as yet are not infected are kept from it by the blessed providence of God through the instrumentality of the church.

We have always held, and still hold and teach, that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ's image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which He cleanses us from our sins.

Pause here one moment, and let me not distract your minds while I say, that while the Spirit of God is said in Scripture to be the author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agent which must not be forgotten. "Sanctify them," said Christ, "through thy *truth*. Thy word is truth."

Young men of the Bible class, look up the passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God. You will find that there are very many. It is the Word of God which sanctifies the soul. The Spirit of God brings to our minds the commands and precepts and doctrines of truth, and applies them with power. These are heard in the ear, and being received in the heart, they work in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure.

How important then that the truth should be preached. How necessary that you never tolerate a ministry which leaves out the great doctrines or the great precepts of the Gospel. The truth is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear the truth, depend upon it, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths."

Do not say of such and such an error, "Oh, it is a mere matter of opinion." If it be a mere matter of opinion today, it will be a matter of practice tomorrow. No man has an error of judgment, without sooner or later having an error in practice. As every grain of truth is a grain of diamond dust, prize it all. Hold fast the truth which you have received and which you have been taught.

"Hold fast the form of sound words," and in this day when articles are ridiculed, when creeds are despised, hold fast to that which you have received that you may be "faithful among the faithless found," for by so holding the truth shall you be sanctified by the Spirit of God. The agent, then, is the Spirit of God working through the truth.

But now let me bring you back to my old figure. In another sense we are sanctified through Christ Jesus, because it is His blood and the water which flowed from His side in which the Spirit washes our heart from the defilement and propensity of sin. It is said of our Lord—"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Remember again, "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

I say again, there are hundreds of texts of this kind. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." In that memorable passage where Paul, struggling with corruption, exclaims, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the answer is not concerning the Holy Spirit, but he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Space forbids the multiplication of texts, but there are many passages to the effect that our sanctification is the work of Jesus Christ. He is our sanctifier, for He filled the sacred laver of regeneration in which we are washed, filled it with His blood and with the water which flowed from His side, and in this by the Holy Spirit we are washed.

There is no being sanctified by the law, the Spirit does not use legal precepts to sanctify us, there is no purification by mere dictates of morality, the Spirit of God does not use them. No, just as when Marah's waters were bitter, Moses to make them sweet commanded them to take a tree and cast it into the waters, and they were sweet, so the Spirit of God, finding our natures bitter, takes the tree of Calvary, casts it into the stream, and everything is made pure. He finds us lepers, and to make us clean He dips the hyssop of faith in the precious blood, and sprinkles it upon us and we are clean.

There is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of Christ not merely to make satisfaction for sin, but to work the death of sin. The blood appears before God, and He is well pleased, it falls on us—lusts wither, and old corruptions feel the death stroke. Dagon falls before the ark, and although the stump thereof is left, and corruptions still remain, yet Christ shall put an end to all our inbred sins, and through Him we shall mount to heaven perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Just as the Spirit only works through the truth, so the blood of Christ only works through *faith*. Young men of the Catechumen and Bible classes, again I say, turn to your Bibles at your leisure, and find out the many passages which speak of faith as sanctifying the soul, and purifying the mind. Our faith lays hold on the precious atonement of Christ. It sees Jesus suffering on the tree and it says—"I vow revenge against the sins which nailed Him there," and thus His precious blood works in us a detestation of all sin, and the Spirit through the truth, working by faith, applies the precious blood of sprinkling, and we are made clean and are accepted in the Beloved.

I am afraid that I have confused and darkened counsel with words, but yet, I think, I may have suggested some trains of thought which will lead you to see that Holy Scripture teaches us a sanctification, not narrow and concise, so as to be written down with a short definition as in our creed books, but wide, large, and expansive. A work in which we are sanctified by God the Father, sanctified in Christ, and yet have our sanctification through the Spirit of God.

Oh! my dear hearers, strive after practical holiness. You that love Christ, do not let any say of you—"There is a Christian, but he is worse than other men." It is not our eloquence, our learning, our fame, or our wealth, that can ever commend Christ to the world, it is the holy living of Christians.

I was speaking the other day to a Brother minister about this Bi-centenary movement, which I fear will be an immense injury to Christ's church. I feared lest it should be made an opportunity for strife among brethren, error must be corrected, but love must not be wounded. He remarked, and I thought it was so truthful, that the only way by which dissent flourished of old was, by the then superior holiness of its ministers, so that whilst the church clergyman was hunting, the dissenting minister was visiting the sick, and said he, "This is the way in which we shall lose power, if our ministers become political and worldly, it will be all over with us."

I have never shunned to rebuke when I thought it necessary, but I hate contention. The only allowable strife is to labor who can be the most holy, the most earnest, the most zealous, who can do the most for the poor and the ignorant, and who can lift Christ's cross the highest. That is the way to lift up the members of any one particular denomination—by the members of that body being more devout, more sanctified, more spiritual-minded than others. All mere party fightings will only gender strife, and animosities, and bickerings, and are not of the Spirit of God, but to live unto God and to be devoted to Him—this is the strength of the church, this will give us the victory, God helping us, and unto His name shall be all the praise.

As for persons here who are not converted and are unregenerate, I cannot address them about sanctification. I have opened a door this morning, but you cannot enter. Only remember, that if you cannot enter into this, you cannot enter into heaven, for—

*“Those holy gates for ever bar,
Pollution, sin, and shame;
None shall obtain admission there,
But followers of the Lamb.”*

May it be yours, to come humbly and confess your sin, and ask and find forgiveness, and then, but not till then, there is hope that you may be sanctified in the Spirit of your mind. The Lord bless you for Jesu’s sake.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.