

A Sanctified Soul

by A.B. Simpson

The sanctification of the soul involves separating it from evil, dedicating it to God, and filling it with God's thoughts and mind.

Scripture: Romans 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Topics: "Sanctification", "The Nature of the Soul"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the significance of a wholly sanctified soul, distinguishing it from the spirit and body. He explores the attributes of the soul, including understanding, tastes, affections, and appetites, and stresses the necessity of sanctifying these faculties to align them with God's will. Simpson argues that the sanctification process involves separating, dedicating, and filling these attributes with the Spirit of God, ensuring they serve divine purposes rather than leading to sin. He highlights the importance of dedicating our understanding and affections to God, allowing Him to transform our natural inclinations into instruments for His glory. Ultimately, Simpson calls for a complete surrender of the soul to God for true sanctification and fulfillment.

Transcript

We have already seen that in the threefold division of our being the spirit represents the higher and divine element, that which knows, trusts, loves, resembles and glorifies God. What then is the soul as distinguished from the spirit and the body, and what is meant by a soul wholly sanctified?

I. THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE SOUL.

It is not necessary for us to descend into all the depths of psychology and attempt to analyze the manifold attributes and faculties of that wondrous consciousness which God has placed within the breast of every human being. It is enough for the present to observe that every one of us is conscious of, at least, the following four great classes of mental endowment, viz., the understanding, the tastes, the affections and passions, and the appetites.

The understanding. This is the seat of intelligence. Many and varied are the chambers in this house of many mansions. Perhaps the first is that which the philosophers have called perception, that which fixes its attention upon objects and becomes directly cognizant of things and thoughts. Next might be named the faculty of intelligence, of acquiring knowledge, of understanding truth and relations, and reasoning, thinking and concluding. To this department also memory belongs, that wondrous attribute which recalls

the past and stores up forever the impressions and sensations of the mind to be the source of joy or pain. Imagination follows next, the faculty which gives the soul the power of ignoring space, of bringing the distant near, of peopling the empty void with the creations of an ideal world, which to the vivid fancy seems as real as the material forms around it. As the correlative of Memory, Expectation looks out upon the future with the magnifying glass of Imagination and springs forward on the wings of Hope, till time and sense are forgotten in the prospect of the bright vista that opens before. Amid all this, as the helm of character and the driver of the fiery coursers of the soul, sits reason or judgment, the faculty of comparing or concluding, of weighing instructions and deciding courses of action. Sometimes it is called common-sense, and sometimes the exercise of the judgment. All these are but a few of the mental qualities of which each of us is conscious, and which constitute the leading attributes of the soul. When we think how much they have to do with every interest of human life, it is not necessary to show how important it is that they should be sanctified so as to be guarded from error and perversion and used for their highest ends, for our welfare, the good of others and the glory of God.

The tastes follow next in order. Each of us possesses certain special talents and mental inclinations and adaptations. The result of this is that one man is a born musician, another has a genius for painting, another is a natural architect or sculptor, another a great inventor, another a traveler, and another a poet or writer of fiction.

Each of us then has some special bias of mind, and adaptation is usually indicated by inclination. But each of these tastes needs to be sanctified. Just as in the class of faculties previously enumerated the unholy imagination or the false judgment will lead the literary man to be a prurient Ouida or a passionate Byron, so here, a false taste will make a lover of art a disseminator of vice, the unhallowed love of music a channel for Satan's most insidious temptations, and even the love of beauty and refinement but an instigation to self-adornment, fashionable extravagance and the wild carnival of idolatrous worldliness. Every one of these tastes came to us originally from God, who is Himself a lover of the beautiful and has made everything to reflect His own infinite taste and wisdom, but every one of them may be but a minister to self and sin and a source of degradation and defilement. Do we not most earnestly desire that all these gifts of heaven, unbalanced and perverted by the Fall, shall be wholly sanctified?

Deeper still, in the soul's innermost chamber dwell the affections of the heart. This is the home of love, the mother's love, the bridegroom's love, the love of the child, the brother, the friend, the ties of kindred and the deep fellowships of congenial affinity and common tastes, dispositions, interests and aims. We have spoken in the former chapter of love as one of the exercises of the sanctified spirit. We referred there, of course, to the love which the Holy Spirit gives to the heart, a divine love for the Supreme Object and all others related to Him. We speak now of the human affections instinctive in the soul, which are not wrong in themselves but which need to be sanctified and lifted above self, sin and excess. Along with these affections are the various passions and emotions, pride, acquisitiveness, anger, emulation, mirth, joy, sorrow, and many more, all of which are right or wrong according to their measure, their motive and their limitations. It is possible to be angry and sin not, to be proud without vanity, to emulate without envy, to "covet earnestly the best gifts" without avarice, and to be ambitious for the highest recompenses without worldliness in spirit or aim.

Yet all these without the grace of God have become like false lights or reefs of rock and ruin to innumerable human souls, whose very brilliancy of natural endowments and success have but aggravated more utterly their destruction.

Lower still in the scale of beings are the appetites and propensities, which link the mind with the body and become the hand-maids of the physical organs. These we shall speak of more in detail in connection with the sanctification of the body. It is only necessary here to refer to them as qualities of the mind which touch the physical senses and act through them. All these appetites are natural and in their normal state, in a properly balanced and sanctified being, are sinless and blameless, but owing to the disturbing influences of the Fall and the perversion of human nature they have become disturbed from their true order and subordinate place, and have become in many cases degrading and destructive. A man whose reasons and affections are under the control of his appetites has started downward on the steep incline which soon must bring him to the level of the brutes, nay, to a still deeper plunge, measured from the height from which he fell. This, at last, is the wretched and hideous condition of many a human soul, and, hence, the supreme necessity that the appetites and propensities which link us so closely with the brute should be wholly sanctified.

This is a brief survey of the human soul. To realize at once its grandeur and its peril we have only to think of the records of human history and the brilliant panorama which has swept over the stage of time, to fall upon the farther verge over the steep and awful precipices of ruin. How clear and lofty the intellects that have searched out and sought to teach the ages the principles of truth! How wonderful the achievements, even without God's light, of a Plato, a Socrates, a Confucius, a Seneca! How sublime the genius and imagination of a Homer, a Virgil, a Dante, a Shakespeare! How splendid the force of an Alexander and a Napoleon! How superb the taste of a Phidias, a Wren, a Raphael, a Michael Angelo! How glowing and glorious the eloquence of a Demosthenes, a Cicero, a Chatham! And yet withal, how sad the highest issues of human culture and wisdom! How bitter and disappointing the brightest prospects the best of them could look forward to, and how fearful the wreck to which many of them plunged even before the eternal depths were revealed to view! How frequently the brightest intellects have the saddest lives, and how extreme the perils that encompass the path of genius, success or beauty! Oh, how the world needs the Sanctifier to guard even her richest treasures from being their own destroyers!

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SOUL?

How are all these attributes and faculties to be wholly sanctified? Well, we cannot better make this plain than by applying our three simple tests in detail to each of them. They can be separated, dedicated and filled with the Spirit and life of God and thus, and in no other way, can they be wholly sanctified. Shall we apply the tests in detail?

1. What about our understanding?

(a) Is it separated? Have we learned to withdraw our attention and perception from all that is unholy and to refuse to see forbidden things? Is not this the real source of most of our difficulties about a holy life, that we allow the unholy world to sweep in through all the avenues of our being and absorb all our attention until there is inevitable pollution and misery? The very first thing therefore for us to do is to close the hatches and keep out the billows, to close the shutters and exclude the objects that intrude themselves upon our gaze, to drop the eyelash and be kept as the apple of His eye from the seeing of evil. We can do all this, refuse to perceive and notice the evil around us. As you walk down the street, have you ever been conscious of two forces, the one holding your attention to God in a spirit of quiet recollection and communion, the other tempting you to look at everything on the street, to take in the glare of the shop windows and the busy crowd and the whole animated scene and many a picture of evil, which, if it does not defile, distracts you from the simplicity of your spirit? Have you never felt, on glancing over your

morning paper, a check upon your mind as your eye fell upon the glaring columns and a voice which seemed to hold you from absorbing with your eye all the reeking filth that literary scavengers had shoveled from the alleys and garrets of a wicked metropolis; and have you not felt, when you had read it, all saturated with uncleanness, even though you yourself had not any participation in these crimes? Your thoughts had touched them and therefore were defiled.

The writer was once tempted to read Robert Ingersol's lectures with a view of answering them, but after reading a single page he felt so deluged with the shower of brimstone that poured from every page upon his whole being that he dared not go farther, and felt that he could only warn his people from any contact with such things, and tell them that "evil communications corrupt good manners," and that God's ground was to abstain from the very appearance of evil and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, not even so far as to hear them. He was once called upon by a young convert, a very earnest Christian woman, who had gone one Sabbath night, under strong pressure, to hear this daring blasphemer. Her face was fairly shining with the light of the pit, and she had called to tell her pastor that she was fascinated and knew not what was the matter, but that she had been so captivated by his brilliant blasphemy that she seemed to have lost her power of resisting. Therefore the very first thing in order to the sanctification of the mind is to separate it from all evil by absolutely ignoring evil and refusing any contact with it.

So, again, we should separate ourselves from thoughts as well as objects which are not purifying. There are ten thousand inward activities which spring up in the soul without any touch from the external world or any observation of people or things. Many of these are evil thoughts, and still more of them are unnecessary thoughts. These we must suppress. It is possible so to hold the reins of the mind that it will refuse to dwell upon thoughts which the judgment denies. It may be like the waves which beat against the vessel's timbers, but this is very different from letting them into the hold through the hatches. We can keep the hatches down and refuse to open them, and if we do so, God will take our thoughts and hold them captive and fill our minds with His higher, holier thoughts. The truth is that a great many people wear their minds out with useless thinking. Much of the waste of brain and the dead pain in the cerebellum is not due to overwork for God, but is due to a thousand cares and questions which did nobody any good and did us infinite harm. A sanctified soul is one that has learned to be still and cease from all its own activities. This is the meaning of the Psalmist's passionate cry when wearied with his own exhausting activity, "I hate thoughts but thy law do I love." This is the meaning of the Apostle when he says in the 10th chapter of Second Corinthians, "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Our imaginations, our thoughts must be suppressed until we learn to wait in stillness for God's voice and God's thoughts. Thus we shall save ourselves needless exhaustion and ever be within touch of God and out of innumerable sources of temptation. For every one of Satan's wandering thoughts is like a thistle-down, with wings at one end and a seed of evil at the other. Softly it floats into the soul, but ere it goes, it deposits its little germ in the fertile soil which brings forth its harvest of poisonous thorns.

So, again, we must cease from the unholy activities of the memory as it dwells on the forbidden past, and the imagination, as it builds its vain castles in the air or makes temptation vivid and real before the fascinated soul; and so from our reasoning and judgment, as they proudly sit in council, perhaps over God's Word or our brother's character, or determine in godless independence our own course of action instead of listening to the voice of the Master. We must learn to cease from all these activities, to distrust them independently of the Spirit's guidance, and the Master's will, and to hold ourselves unto God for His

complete direction and possession.

(b) And so we apply our second test to the faculties of the understanding. Are they dedicated? Is our attention dedicated to God? Can we say, "My heart is fixed, my mind's stayed on Thee"? Are our thoughts dedicated to God? Is our intelligence devoted to know His Word and will, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ? Is our memory dedicated to be stored with His truth? Does our imagination dwell upon His Word until it makes the things of eternity more real and vivid than the objects of sense? Is our whole power of thought and reason and judgment and decision wholly yielded to Him, to know and do His will? He is the Author of our intellect, He has made it for Himself, it can find its loftiest employment and satisfaction only in God and His Word. And He needs our mind as well as our spirit to use as the instrument and organ of His high and holy service.

(c) And, finally, is our understanding and intellect filled with God, for He must possess us Himself and put in us His thought and mind as well as His spirit and grace? The Christ who came to give Himself to us had not only a divine nature but a reasonable soul, and this He imparts to us in our union with His person. "We have the mind of Christ," and into this weak and erring brain can come the very understanding of our blessed Master, so that, as the great Kepler, we may say, "I am thinking God's thoughts after God."

The Holy Spirit is a quickening force to the consecrated intellect. Minds that have been dull and obscure before have risen beneath His touch to the highest intellectual attainments and the mightiest achievements of human genius. Every intelligent Christian knows the story of Augustine, the worn-out wreck, who emerged from a wasted youth to become, by the power of grace, the teacher of twelve centuries and the father of evangelical theology.

Again, such a lost intellect was Thomas Chalmers until kindled from above by the power of grace and a divine enthusiasm, and from that hour he became the leader of the religious thought and life of the country and his age. Such again, in the higher ranks of life, was Wilberforce. As a young, aristocratic Englishman, his early years were frittered away in the frivolities of fashionable life and his mind seemed to have but little force and brilliancy. But from the hour in which he gave himself to God, every power in his intellect seemed to be awakened and intensified, until he became the champion of the greatest movement of modern philanthropy, and the honored and successful leader of his country in one of the greatest social movements of English history.

And so many a humble name, a Harry Moorhouse from the ranks of English pickpockets, a Jerry McAuley from the wharf thieves of New York, a Dwight Moody from the shoemaker apprentices of Boston, and a great multitude of the most gifted ministers, evangelists and Christian workers of today, all owe their mental force and that combination of qualities, which constitutes real genius, to the touch of God upon a mind which, without His grace and quickening life, would never have risen above obscurity.

But in a degree in which, perhaps, these brethren have not fully understood, the Lord Jesus is willing to possess the understanding and all the faculties and so fill them with His Word and the power of presenting it effectually to others as to constitute a new era in their work for God, as wonderful as the healing of the body or the consecration of the spirit. There is a distinct baptism of the Holy Ghost for the mind as well as for the spirit. The latter gives the qualities of earnestness, faith, love, courage, unction, and heavenly fire; but the former gives soundness of judgment, clearness of expression, pungency of thought, power of utterance, attractiveness of style, and all those qualities which can fit us to be meet vessels for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work.

A Christian lady recently illustrated this in a simple conversation by telling of a vision which had come to her while praying to God to give her power to understand His Word and teach it to others. She said that there suddenly appeared before her mind, so vividly that it almost seemed real, a naked and empty skull. It almost terrified her at first, and it seemed to hint to her some message of death. But it was immediately followed by the picture of a flaming fire that seemed to enter the empty skull and fill it in every part, and then a thought was whispered to her heart, "This is the answer to your prayer. Your busy brain must become as dead and empty as that skull and then the Holy Ghost will fill it with His glowing fire and His quickened life; bringing His thoughts and feelings, and taking possession of it as His simple instrument and the organ of His working and His will." This is, perhaps, the most perfect figure by which we can express the thought of this message.

Shall we not, beloved, prostrate our proud intellects and lay our wisdom low at Jesus' feet, and, into brains emptied of their self-consciousness and self-sufficiency, receive the baptism of His fire? Shall we not with a new sense of His meaning breathe out the prayer:

"Refining fire go through my heart,
Illuminate my soul,
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole"?

2. Hitherto we have spoken only of the understanding and intellect, the thinking, reasoning faculties of the mind, but we have seen that there are other departments. There are the tastes which give direction to our mental faculties, and bias to our choice, and zest to our employments. Take, for example, the love of music. It is not necessary to show how it may be perverted, and is, frequently, for worldliness, selfishness, and sin. It is the very handmaid of vice and the fascination which allures the heedless world from God and all thought of eternity and salvation.

And yet it is a divine gift and may be wholly sanctified and gloriously used. But it must, first, be separated from all earthly alloy and sinful defilement. The voice that sings for God must not be prostituted to the indulgence of worldliness and sensuality. How often the lips that lead the worship of Jehovah in the sanctuary on Sabbath are found ministering to an ungodly or even to the promiscuous crowd of the music hall or the beer garden before the next six days are ended!

One of Germany's greatest painters refused to use his brush, when offered a fortune by Napoleon, to paint a Venus for the Louvre, because he said he had just painted the face of Jesus and his art might never be desecrated again. And so our tastes must be separated. Well I remember the cloud of condemnation that fell upon my spirit when listening once in my own parlors to the leader of my choir singing the famous "Ave Maria." I could not imagine what had come over my spirit until I began to think of the words and remember that they were words addressed to a human being which belonged only to Jehovah, and I could find no peace until I kindly but firmly bore witness to my dear brother, and promised God that I would never again listen to such blasphemy without faithful protest.

And yet how often Christians allow their ears to be defiled by listening to unholy strains by their love of music, and their own voices to be prostituted by unholy performances in the concert or even the private drawing-room. But not only must this taste be separated, but it must be dedicated to God and used for His

service and glory, and then He will fill it with His own anointing and use it to work most gloriously. What ministry today has been more honored than gospel song? How God has shown in a Bliss, Sankey, or a Phillips the honor He still will put on this simple taste to draw millions, by the power of the consecrated melody of the gospel.

So the love of art must be separated. How many Christian homes there are whose decorations or adornments do not speak for God, but for pagan licentiousness or godless display. How this quality of taste may be separated in the matter of personal dress or adorning from that which speaks for the world and self rather than the meek and lowly Jesus. We may dedicate these tastes so that they may be witnesses for Christ, so that the walls of our chamber shall speak for Him, and our very wardrobe be like the phylacteries of Hebrew garments, written over by the sacred characters which declare the glory of our Lord.

Then our various talents and the qualities that bring us success in the occupations of life may be separated so that we shall be strong in every direction, not for self or earthly glory, but for our Master's service and our highest usefulness. There is nothing that may speak more for God than refinement, good taste and preeminent talents. God wants these things inscribed with "Holiness unto the Lord." Blessed be His name for many a lovely woman and many a gifted man who have laid all the attractions of their person and their mind on His altar; and may the day be hastened when all that is lovely in the endowments of nature and the gifts of His infinite taste and wisdom shall become garlands for His brow and attributes to lay at His feet to whom belong the beauty and the glory, the riches and the honor, the praise and the love of the whole creation!

3. But there still remains the most interesting class of our mental qualities, namely, the emotions and affections of the heart. These, we have seen, belong to the human soul. Above them all is the attribute of love. It is instinctive in some form in every human breast. While there is a divine love which is imparted by the Spirit, yet the soul is endued by the Creator with a strange and exquisite power of loving, and, like the tendrils of a living vine, its chords must reach out in some direction.

But how necessary it is that our love should be separated. How natural it is for the heart, like the vine, to cling to some rotten and ruined wall, from which it must be detached to save it from destruction. Who is there that has reached the high and heavenly place in the consecrated life who does not look back, in the very beginning of his or her progress, to a lonely grave where the heart's first idols were buried beneath the cross of Jesus, and it died to that which was most dear to every natural instinct and affection? The path of holiness with us all began at Mount Moriah, in the altar of Isaac, and the sacrifice of our heart. And it was on the same glorious mount that the majestic temple still rises above the spot where the heart in consecration first gave its all to God. God loves to build His temples still on the site of the altar of sacrifice. It is not that He takes delight in wrenching our affections, but these objects of love most frequently are draining our heart's very life and must be severed like the succulent growth of a plant, if it is ever to bring forth fruit. Happy they who, before they unite their hearts to any objects, first learn the mind and will of God, and thus save themselves from a broken heart. It is not necessary that we should be torn from everything we love if we first learn the mind and will of God. This is separation. This also is dedication, to give the mind to God and ever to give Him the supreme place in its affections.

Beloved, are you thus separated? Are you willing thus to separate your heart and your love from all forbidden love, from every unhallowed friendship, from every purely selfish affection, and to let Christ be the Master of your heart and its chief object of affection and delight? Then indeed will He fill that heart and

adjust all its chords to harmony and happiness, and into every relationship of life so infuse His own Spirit that we shall be enabled to adjust ourselves to all our mingled and manifold situations and relationships, and everyone be a link with Him and a channel of holy service and blessing.

So we might trace through the whole realm of our emotional nature the same great principles, and find that there is not one of our affections and even passions which might not have a holy and sanctified use. Our anger may be so pure that it shall be a holy zeal for God. Our emulation may be so free from envy that it shall impel us to imitate the noble qualities of others. Our acquisitiveness may be so regulated that it may be lifted above avarice and covet earnestly only the best gifts. Our ambition may be so heavenly that it shall be an impulse to others, pressing us forward to the most noble achievements and most enduring rewards, and every throb of joy and sorrow, hope or fear, may be a movement of the heart of Christ along the various chords of our consecrated being, until every voice within us shall join the heavenly chorus, singing evermore, "Blessing and glory and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever."

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