

(The Fourfold Gospel) 2. CHRIST OUR SANCTIFIER

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John xvii. 19. The marginal reading of the last clause is, "That they also might be truly sanctified." This seems to imply that there is something, which passes in the world for holiness, which is not true sanctification. There are counterfeit forms of Christian life, and also defective forms, which do not represent all that the fulness of Christ is able to do for us. Sanctification is the second step in the Four-fold Gospel.

1. WHAT IT IS NOT.

We will look first at what it is not. There are good elements and even holy elements in Christian character, which are not sanctification. It is not regeneration. Sanctification is not conversion. It is a great and blessed thing to become a Christian. It is never a matter of small account. To be saved eternally is cause for eternal joy; but the soul must also enter into sanctification. They are not the same. Regeneration is the be-ginning. It is the germ of the seed, but it is not the summer fullness of the plant. The heart has not yet gained entire victory over the old elements of sin. It is sometimes overcome by them. Regeneration is like building a house and having the work done well. Sanctification is having the owner come and dwell in it and fill it with gladness, and life, and beauty. Many Christians are converted and stop there. They do not go on to the fullness of their life in Christ, and so are in danger of losing what they already possess. Germany brought in the grand truth of justification by faith through the teachings of Martin Luther, but he failed to go on to the deeper teachings of the Christian life. What was the result? Germany to-day is cold and lifeless, and the very hot-bed of rationalism and all its attendant evils. How different it has been in England! The labors of men like Wesley, and Baxter, and Whitfield, who understood the mission of the Holy Spirit, have led the Christian life of England, and America, her offspring, into deeper and more permanent channels. You will find that the men and women who do not press on in their Christian experience to gain the fullness of their inheritance in Him, will often become cold and formal. The evil in their own heart will assert itself again and will be very likely to overcome them, and their work will bring confusion and disaster to the cause of Christ. If they escape the result, it will be as by fire. You have doubtless noticed young Christians who have seemed to be marvelously converted and filled with the love of God, but they have not entered into the deeper life of Christ, and in an evil hour they failed. They had gained a new heart, but they had neglected to get the deeper teaching and life which Christ has for all His children. Sanctification is not morality, nor any attainments of character. There is very much that is lovely in human life which is not sanctification. A man cannot build up a good human character himself and then

call it the work of God. It will not stand the strain that is sure to come upon it. Only the house that is founded upon the Rock of Ages will abide securely in the wrath of the elements. Sanctification is not your own work; it is not a gradual attainment which you can grow into by your own efforts. If you should be able to build such a structure yourself, and add to it year after year until it was completed, would you not then stand off with a pardonable pride and look upon it as your own work? No, dear friends, you cannot grow into sanctification. You will grow after you are in it into a fuller, riper and more mature development of life in Christ, but you must take it at its commencement as a gift, not as a growth. It is an obtainment, not an attainment. You cannot sanctify yourselves. The only thing to do is to give yourself wholly to God, a voluntary sacrifice. This is intensely important. It is but a light thing to do for Him. But He must do the work of cleansing and filling. Sanctification is not the work of death. It is strange that any one should think there could be a sanctifying influence in the dying struggle. Yet many have lived in that delusion for years. They expect that the cold sweat of that last hour and the convulsive throbbing of the sinking heart will somehow place them in the arms of their Sanctifier. This comes in some degree from the old idea that their sin is seated in the body-the old Manichaen teaching that the flesh is unholy, and if we were once rid of the body, the fleshless tenant would be free from sin and would spring at once into boundless purity. There is no sin in these bones and flesh and ligaments. If you cast off your hand you have lost no sin. If both hands are gone you are as sinful as ever. If you cut off your head and yield up your life, sin would still remain in the soul. Sin is not in the body, it is in the heart, and the soul, and the will. Divest yourself of this body of clay, and the spirit will still be left, a hard, rebellious, sinful thing. Death will not sanctify it. It is a poor time to be converted. It will be a poorer time to be sanctified. I would not advise any one to put off their salvation to the dying hour, when the heart is oppressed and the brain clouded, and the mind has need of confidence and rest and a sense of victory to enable it to enter into His presence with fullness of joy. Nor is it a better time for the deeper work of the Holy Ghost. Sanctification should be entered into intelligently when the mind is clear. It is a deliberate act calling for the calm exercise of all the faculties working under the controlling influence of the Divine Spirit. Sanctification is not self-perfection. We shall never become so inherently good that there will be no possibility or temptation to sin. We shall never reach a place where we shall not need each moment to abide in Him. The instant we feel able to live without Him, there comes up a separate life within us which is not a sanctified life. The reason the exalted spirits in heaven fell from their high estate was, perhaps, because they became conscious of their own beauty, and pride arose in their hearts. They looked at themselves, and became as gods unto themselves. The moment you or I become conscious that we are strong or pure, that instant the work of disintegration begins. It has made us independent of Him, and we have separated ourselves from the life of Christ. We must be simple, empty vessels, open channels for His life to flow through. Then Christ\

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