

A Message for the Earnest Seeker

by Art Katz

Sanctification is the process of putting the self-life aside and allowing God's life to take over, requiring a crisis and a series of moral choices.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Dying To Self", "Sanctification"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the necessity of dying to the self-life in order to experience the true light and glory of God. He draws on T. Austin Sparks' insights, highlighting that even virtuous actions can stem from the self-life, which must be surrendered for true sanctification. Katz warns that many resist this process, preferring the comfort of revival over the hard choices of the Cross. He calls for a deep examination of our relationship with God, urging believers to recognize their ungodliness and the need for a transformative crisis. Ultimately, he challenges the church to seek a genuine encounter with God's presence, rather than settling for superficial improvements.

Transcript

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In much the same way as the Shekinah glory lights the holiest place of all, so also are we 'lighted' to the degree that first the natural (open daylight at the brazen altar), and later the 'religious' (the seven-branched oil-fed priestly serviced Menorah) gives way finally to the unaided Presence of God alone. T. Austin Sparks in his book, *The School of Christ*, p.55 writes, This is stating a tremendous fact. Every bit of real light which is in the direction of that ultimate effulgence, the revealing of the glory of God in us and through us, every bit of it is in Christ Jesus, and can only be had in Him on the basis of the natural man having been altogether put outside, put away, and a new man having been brought into being...

This "putting away" is nothing other than the death to what we are in ourselves. The 'light' referred to above is available only in His life; any other light, however impressive and well-intentioned, constitutes a false light. Sparks continues, "We must go down with Him into death, and there, under the act of the Spirit

of God (my emphasis), in union with Christ buried, there is a transmission of His Life to us" (p.56).. "The necessity [is] of our letting that life of ours go absolutely."

What is being described here is not our defective life, or even our sin-life, but our virtuous and gifted life, ironically, even that measure that has been obtained through His grace!¾ "Not just the self-life in its most [evident] evil forms, but the self-life in its totality" (p.70). Sparks continues, My point is this, that you and I must not think of the self-life only as something manifestly corrupt. There is a great deal done for God with the purest motive that is done out from ourselves.

There are many thoughts, ideas, judgments, which are sublime, beautiful, but they are ours, and if we did but know the truth, they are altogether different from God's (p.70). This kind of [Jacob: We have not yet come to our Jabbok "He will empty out"] man dies hard. He does not like being put aside. This requires a Crisis, and I think many of us are at that threshold. If you are not yet experiencing it, Sparks continues, "expect that you are going to fall to pieces...that the beauty you thought was there will be altogether marred.

Expect to discover that you are far more corrupt than you ever thought you were"... "This death of Christ as it is wrought in us breaks up our natural life, it scatters it, pulls it to pieces, takes all its beauty away" (p.58). We as the church are as presently unfitted for the glory of God as present day Israel. Only those who are satisfied with that nation, hoping for its 'improvement,' will be equally as satisfied with themselves¾ hoping for their improvement! "The divide is so utter...unless the Spirit of God wrought a miracle in us, the whole thing would be of another world" (p.67)!

There is too much guile in us to see the open heaven and 'the greater thing'! Only those who ascend the holy hill of Zion are those who have pure hearts, and who have not lifted their souls up to vanity or deceit (Ps.24). Only the 144,000, who are redeemed from the earth, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and in their mouths was found no guile for they are without fault before the throne of God "the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb"(Rev.14:1-5). I believe that the redeeming "from the earth" is not the mere arbitrary determination of a God of fate, but that this redeeming is the result of a conscious choice by the believer that enables the death of the 'old man' to be performed.

This would constitute the "generation (i.e., kind) of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O God of Jacob" (Ps. 24.6). Rather, many of us have resisted sanctification, interpreting it as the unjust work of men rather than the 'strange' work of God and exhibiting in our self-defense or petulant self-pityings and self-justifyings the very evidence of the thing God sought to extirpate. We have missed or misinterpreted the crisis, choosing to remain on 'this side' of Resurrection (having been aided in that misinterpretation by many who stand in the same need of it), and woe betide them for whom it needs be repeated¾ so great is the divine jealousy to spare us eternal dismay.

Whatever the validity of the recent worldwide "revivals," it is clear that we prefer to be acted upon by the power of the Spirit than the hard choosings of the Cross; that we desire "the seasons of refreshing" than the "repent ye therefore and be ye converted" that precedes it. Are we willing for choices [the issue of character rather than the alleviation of personality disorders] that as Oswald Chambers says "are continually in antagonism to the entrenchments of the natural life"? ...this is never done easily, nor does God intend it to be done easily...The warfare is not against sin [but it is] when we have entered into the experience of sanctification that the fight begins...It is done only by a series of moral choices (My Utmost for His Highest, Sept.8).

An Addendum On Righteousness Thoughts From Karl Barth's The Epistle to the Romans Karl Barth writes, "There are [certain] characteristic features of our relationship to God, as it takes shape on "this side" of resurrection [sanctification]. Our relation to God is ungodly. We suppose that we know what we are saying when we say 'God.' We assign Him the highest place in our world, and in so doing, we place Him fundamentally on one line with ourselves and with things...We press ourselves into proximity with Him, and unthinking, we make Him nigh unto ourselves.

We allow ourselves an ordinary communication with Him, we permit ourselves to reckon with Him as though this were not an extraordinary behavior on our part. We dare to deck ourselves out as His companions, patrons, advisers, and commissioners. We confound time with eternity. This is the ungodliness of our relation to God. And our relation to God is unrighteous. Secretly we are ourselves the masters in this relationship. We are not concerned with God, but with our own requirements, to which God must adjust Himself....And so, when we set God upon the throne of the world, we mean by God ourselves.

In 'believing' on Him, we justify, enjoy, and adore ourselves. Our devotion consists in a solemn affirmation of ourselves...Under the banners of humility and emotion, we rise up in rebellion against God, such is our relation to God apart from and without Christ on this side of resurrection. God Himself is not acknowledged as God, and what is called 'God' is in fact man. By living to ourselves we serve the 'No-God.' Men have imprisoned and encased the truth of the righteousness of God; they have trimmed it to their own measure, and thereby robbed it both of its earnestness and its significance.

They have made it ordinary, harmless and useless; and thereby transformed it into untruth. This has all been brought to light by their ungodliness, and this ungodliness will not fail to thrust them into ever new forms of unrighteousness...This is the rebellion which makes it impossible for us to see the new dimensional plane which is the boundary of our world and the meaning of our salvation. Against such rebellion there can only be revealed the wrath of God (pp.44-45). And so the light has become in us darkness...Dark, blind, uncritical, capricious, mankind becomes a thing in itself.

Heartless, perceiving without observing and therefore empty, thoughtless...and therefore blind is our heart...and soulless in the world. When men do not find themselves within the sphere of the knowledge of the unknown God, when they avoid the true God...This is the cause of the night in which we are wandering: this also is the cause of the Wrath of God which has been manifested over our heads...That God is not known as God is due not merely to some error of thought or to some gap in experience, but to a fundamentally wrong attitude to life. Vanity of mind and blindness of heart inevitably bring into being corrupt conduct (pp.48-9)

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