

The Doctrine of Sanctification 3. ITS NECESSITY

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

The Doctrine of Sanctification

3. ITS NECESSITY

It is our earnest desire to write this article not in a theological or merely abstract way, but in a practical manner: in such a strain that it may please the Lord to speak through it to our needy hearts and search our torpid consciences. It is a most important branch of our subject, yet one from which we are prone to shrink, being very unpalatable to the flesh. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5), our hearts naturally hate holiness, being opposed to any experimental acquaintance with the same. As the Lord Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19), which may justly be paraphrased "men loved sin rather than holiness," for in Scripture "darkness" is the emblem of sin the Evil one being denominated "the power of darkness"— as "light" is the emblem of the ineffably Holy One (1 John 1:5). But though by nature man is opposed to the Light, it is written, "Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). To the same effect the Lord Jesus declared "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). God will not call unto nearness with Himself those who are carnal and corrupt. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3): what concord can there be between an unholy soul and the thrice holy God? Our God is "glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11), and therefore those whom He separates unto Himself must be suited to Himself, and be made "partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10). The whole of His ways with man exhibit this principle, and His Word continually proclaims that He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Him" (Ps. 5:4). By our fall in Adam we lost not only the favour of God, but also the purity of our natures, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and sanctified in our inner man. There is now a spiritual leprosy spread over all our nature which makes us loathsome to God and puts us into a state of separation from Him. No matter what pains the sinner takes to be rid of his horrible disease, he does but hide and not cleanse it. Adam concealed neither his nakedness nor the shame of it by his fig-leaf contrivance; so those who have no other covering for their natural filthiness than the externals of religion rather proclaim than hide it. Make no mistake on this score: neither the outward profession of Christianity nor the doing of a few good works will give us access to the thrice Holy One. Unless we are washed by the Holy Spirit, and in the blood of Christ, from our native pollutions, we cannot enter the kingdom of glory. Alas, with what forms of godliness, outward appearances, external

embellishments are most people satisfied. How they mistake the shadows for the substance, the means for the end itself. How many devout Laodiceans are there who know not that they are "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3 :17). No preaching affects them, nothing will bring them to exclaim with the prophet, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee my God" (Ezra 9:6). No, if they do but preserve themselves from the known guilt of such sins as are punishable among men, to all other things their conscience seems dead: they have no inward shame for anything between their souls and God, especially not for the depravity and defilement of their natures: of that they know, feel, bewail nothing. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). Although they had never been cleansed by the Holy Spirit, nor their hearts purified by faith, (Acts 15:9), yet they esteemed themselves to be pure, and had not the least sense of their foul defilement. Such a generation were the self-righteous Pharisees of Christ's day: they were constantly cleansing their hands and cups, engaged in an interminable round of ceremonial washings, yet were they thoroughly ignorant of the fact that within they were filled with all manner of defilement (Matt. 23:25-28). So is a generation of churchgoers today; they are orthodox in their views, reverent in their demeanor, regular in their contributions, but they make no conscience of the state of their hearts. That sanctification or personal holiness which we here desire to show the absolute necessity of, lies in or consists of three things. First, that internal change or renovation of our souls, whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. Second, that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God in all duties of obedience and abstinence from evil, issuing from a principle of faith and love. Third, that directing of all our actions unto the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. This, and nothing short of this, is evangelical and saving sanctification. The heart must be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God's nature and will: its motives, desires, thoughts and actions require to be purified. There must be a spirit of holiness working within so as to sanctify our outward performances if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom "there is no darkness at all." Evangelical holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in pure thoughts, impulses and affections of the soul, chiefly in that disinterested love from which all good works must flow if they are to receive the approbation of Heaven. Not only must there be an abstinence from the execution of sinful lusts, but there must be a loving and delighting to do the will of God in a cheerful manner, obeying Him without repining or grudging against any duty, as if it were a grievous; yoke to be borne. Evangelical sanctification is that holiness of heart which causes us to love God supremely, so as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, for life or death; and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This entire sanctification of our whole inner and outer man is absolutely indispensable. As there must be a change of state before there can be of life—"make the tree good, and his fruit (will be) good" (Matt. 12:33)—so there must be sanctification before there can be glorification. Unless we are purged from the pollution of sin, we can never be fit for communion with God. "And there shall in no wise enter into it (the eternal dwelling place of God and His people) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). "To suppose that an unpurged sinner can be brought into the blessed enjoyment of God, is to overthrow both the law and the Gospel, and to say that Christ died in vain" (J. Owen, Vol. 2: p. 511). Personal holiness is equally imperative as is the forgiveness of sins in order to eternal bliss. Plain and convincing as should be the above statements, there is a class of professing Christians who wish to regard the justification of the believer as constituting almost the whole of his salvation, instead of its being only one aspect thereof. Such people delight to dwell upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they evince little or no concern about personal holiness. On the other hand, there are not a few who in their reaction from a one sided emphasis upon justification by grace through faith alone, have gone to the

opposite extreme, making sanctification the sum and substance of all their thinking and preaching. Let it be solemnly realized that while a man may learn thoroughly the scriptural doctrine of justification and yet not be himself justified before God, so he may be able to detect the crudities and errors of "the Holiness people," and yet be completely unsanctified himself. But it is chiefly the first of these two errors we now desire to expose, and we cannot do better than quote at length from one who has most helpfully dealt with it. "We are to look upon holiness as a very necessary part of that salvation that is received by faith in Christ. Some are so drenched in a covenant of works, that they accuse us for making good works needless to salvation, if we will not acknowledge them to be necessary, either as conditions to procure an interest in Christ, or as preparatives to fit us for receiving Him by faith. And others, when they are taught by the Scriptures that we are saved by faith, even by faith without works, do begin to disregard all obedience to the law as not at all necessary to salvation, and do account themselves obliged to it only in point of gratitude; if it be wholly neglected, they doubt not but free grace will save them nevertheless. Yea, some are given up to such strong Antinomian delusions, that they account it a part of the liberty from bondage of the law purchased by the blood of Christ, to make no conscience of breaking the law in their conduct. "One cause of these errors that are so contrary one to the other is that many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by 'salvation' but to be delivered from Hell, and to enjoy heavenly happiness and glory; hence they conclude that, if good works be a means of glorification, and precedent to it, they must also be a precedent means of our whole salvation, and if they be not a necessary means of our whole salvation, they are not at all necessary to glorification. But though 'salvation' be often taken in Scripture by way of eminency for its perfection in the state of heavenly glory, yet, according to its full and proper signification, we are to understand by it all that freedom from the evil of our natural corrupt state, and all those holy and happy enjoyments that we receive from Christ our Saviour, either in this world by faith, or in the world to come by glorification. Thus, justification, the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us, the privilege of adoption (deliverance from the reigning power of indwelling sin. A. W. P.) are parts of our 'salvation' which we partake of in this life. Thus also, the conformity of our hearts to the law of God, and the fruits of righteousness with which we are filled by Jesus Christ in this life, are a necessary part of our 'salvation.' "God saveth us from our sinful uncleanness here, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:29; Titus 3 :5), as well as from Hell hereafter. Christ was called Jesus, i.e., a Saviour: because He saves His people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Therefore, deliverance from our sins is part of our 'salvation,' which is begun in this life by justification and sanctification, and perfected by glorification in the life to come. Can we rationally doubt whether it be any proper part of our salvation by Christ to be quickened, so as to be enabled to live to God, when we were by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and to have the image of God in holiness and righteousness restored to us, which we lost by the fall; and to be freed from a vile dishonourable slavery to Satan and our own lusts, and made the servants of God; and to be honoured so highly as to walk by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? and what is all this but holiness in heart and life? "Conclude we, then, that holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity—as part of the end itself. Though we are not saved by good works as Procuring causes, yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of saving grace, 'which God hath prepared that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2:10). It is, indeed, one part of our salvation to be delivered from the bondage of the covenant of works; but the end of this is, not that we may have liberty to sin (which is the worst of slavery) but that we may fulfill the royal law of liberty, and that 'we may serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter' (Gal. 5:13; Rom. 7:6). Yea, holiness in this life is such a part of our 'salvation' that it is a necessary means to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory: for without holiness we can never see God (Heb. 12:14), and are as unfit for His glorious presence as swine for the

presence-chamber of an earthly king. "The last thing to be noted in this direction is that holiness of heart and life is to be sought for earnestly by faith as a very necessary part of our 'salvation.' Great multitudes of ignorant people that live under the Gospel, harden their hearts in sin and ruin their souls forever, by trusting on Christ for such an imaginary 'salvation' as consisteth not at all in holiness, but only in forgiveness of sin and deliverance from everlasting torments. They would be free from the Punishments due to sin, but they love their lusts so well that they hate holiness and desire not to be saved from the service of sin. The way to oppose this pernicious delusion is not to deny, as some do, that trusting on Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith, but rather to show that none do or can trust on Christ for true 'salvation' except they trust on Him for holiness, neither do they heartily desire true salvation, if they do not desire to be made holy and righteous in their hearts and lives. If ever God and Christ gave you 'salvation', holiness will be one part of it; if Christ wash you not from the filth of your sins, you have no part with Him (John 13:8). "What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness! They would be saved and yet be altogether dead in sin, aliens from the life of God, bereft of the image of God, deformed by the image of Satan, his slaves and vassals to their own filthy lusts, utterly unmeet for the enjoyment of God in glory. Such a salvation as that was never purchased by the blood of Christ; and those that seek it abuse the grace of God in Christ, and turn it into lasciviousness. They would be saved by Christ, and yet be out of Christ in a fleshly state; whereas God doth free none from condemnation but those that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; or else they would divide Christ, and take a part of His salvation and leave out the rest; but Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13). They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment. But let them not be deceived, God is not mocked. They understand not what true salvation is, neither were they ever yet thoroughly sensible of their lost estate, and of the great evil of sin; and that which they trust on Christ for is but an imagination of their own brains; and therefore their trusting is gross presumption. "The Gospel-faith maketh us to come to Christ with a thirsty appetite that we may drink of living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (John 7:37, 38), and cry out earnestly to Him to save us, not only from Hell, but from sin, saying, 'Teach us to do Thy will; Thy Spirit is good' (Ps. 143:10); 'Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned' (Jer. 31:18); 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me' (Ps. 51:10). This is the way whereby the doctrine of salvation by grace doth necessitate us to holiness of life, by constraining us to seek for it by faith in Christ, as a substantial part of that 'salvation' which is freely given to us through Christ" (Walter Marshall, 1692). The above is a much longer quotation than we usually make from others, but we could not abbreviate without losing much of its force. We have given it, not only because it is one of the clearest and strongest statements we have met with, but because it will indicate that the doctrine we are advancing is no novel One of our own, but one which was much insisted upon by the Puritans. Alas, that so few today have any real scriptural apprehension of what Salvation really is; alas that many preachers are substituting an imaginary 'salvation' which is fatally deceiving the great majority of their hearers. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, we beg you: if your heart is yet un sanctified, you are still unsaved; and if you pant not after personal holiness, then you are without any real desire for God's salvation. The Salvation which Christ purchased for His people includes both justification and sanctification. The Lord Jesus saves not only from the guilt and penalty of sin, but from the power and pollution of it. Where there is a genuine longing to be freed from the love of sin, there is a true desire for His salvation; but where there is no practical deliverance from the service of sin, then we are strangers to His saving grace. Christ came here to "Perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant: the oath which He sware to our father Abraham; that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life"

(Luke 1:72-75). It is by this we are to test or measure ourselves: are we serving Him "in holiness and righteousness?" If we are not, we have not been sanctified; and if we are unsanctified, we are none of His.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-doctrine-of-sanctification-3-its-necessity/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net