

Concerning Sanctity

by G. Campbell Morgan

G. Campbell Morgan's sermon emphasizes the importance of sanctity and sanctification in the life of a believer, rooted in the truth of God's Word and the teachings of Jesus.

Scripture: Exodus 3:5, Exodus 3:14, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 5:48, John 1:17, John 6:35, John 14:6, John 17:1, John 17:6-8, John 17:17

Topics: "Righteousness", "Sanctification"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the teachings of Christ regarding sanctity, highlighting the necessity for believers to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees to enter the kingdom of heaven. He explains that sanctification is the ultimate goal of salvation, which involves both holiness of character and righteousness of conduct. Morgan illustrates that true righteousness stems from a relationship with God and is expressed through love and obedience to His word. He underscores that Jesus' prayer for His disciples, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' encapsulates the essence of living a sanctified life. Ultimately, Morgan encourages believers to embody both holiness and righteousness in their daily lives as a reflection of their relationship with God.

Transcript

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:48-6:1).

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:1, 6-8, 17).

OUR theme is that of the teaching of CHRIST concerning sanctity.

Our Lord had been speaking to His disciples in the upper room in view of His departure, giving them those teachings which we now speak of as the Paschal discourses. Ceasing to teach, He began to pray; and in this seventeenth Chapter of John we have the words of that great Paschal prayer, offered in anticipation of the Cross.

They are a revelation of His purpose for the men whom He had been teaching, and who were gathered about Him. He prayed here, as He ever prayed, alone, while yet in their presence. They were sinning men, some of the men whom He had come to seek and to save. He was to them the Saviour; not that they at the moment perfectly understood the meaning of His mission, or fully apprehended all the results thereof; but that He stood to them in His own purpose and in His own power, in that sacred relationship.

If they were sinning men, they were also men who had fulfilled the responsibilities which He had revealed. They were men who had repented towards the Kingdom of GOD, and men who had believed in Him; they did not understand His teaching perfectly, had no final truth in their mind concerning the mystery of His Person, and were certainly quite ignorant of that passion towards which His face was set, for they were in rebellion against the very thought thereof. Nevertheless, they had believed in Him, and by that belief had appropriated values far greater than they themselves did know; and He prayed for these men, and in the brief words of this particular verse we have the ultimate word expressive of His desire for them, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Sanctification, - or preferably because not so common, the word sanctity, already used, is the ultimate word in salvation. We have been considering the teaching of our Lord on these correlated themes; sin as constituting the need for salvation; salvation as the supply of that need in the economy of GOD; salvation interpreted by our Lord's use of the word; salvation as the purpose of His mission in the world; salvation as to the human responsibilities which this provision creates.

Now we come to consider the issue of salvation, which is sanctity.

That is the ultimate word concerning salvation. If I may borrow the great words of the Roman letter justification, sanctification, and glorification, - I would remind you that justification is the root; glorification will be the ultimate fruit; while the supreme experience of the present life, which is in itself a fulfillment of those conditions whereby the root shall proceed to the ultimate fruit, is that of sanctification.

The will of our Lord for His people is that they may live the life of sanctity, that they may know the experience of sanctification. These words of JESUS constitute a brief petition in which we have our Lord's teaching concerning sanctity suggestively revealed, when the petition is interpreted by the context of the whole prayer.

He prayed that these men might be sanctified in the truth, and He immediately revealed what He meant by His own term, "the truth," as He said, "Thy Word is truth." We are led therefore to enquire what He meant when He said, "Thy Word." If we have the interpretation of the term "the truth" in the term "Thy Word," then we enquire what He meant, when in that great prayer under the shadow of the Cross, amid the silence of the consecrated hour, He spoke of the Word of GOD.

If we go back to the earlier part of the prayer we shall find our answer.

It is recorded that He said, "I manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me; and they have kept Thy word "()". We immediately

recognize. the connection between the opening statement of that verse, and the closing one; between "I have manifested Thy name" and "They have kept Thy word."

When He spoke therefore of the truth, and defined it as being the Word of GOD, He was, according to the interpretation of His own uttered words, referring to that manifestation of GOD which He had made, and which He described as the manifestation of the Name. And yet again we have further light in the statement:

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8).

In these two statements we have two expressions of our Lord, arresting our attention, and enabling us to understand His thought concerning sanctity. He spoke of the Word of GOD, and when He so spoke He referred to a manifestation of the name of GOD, which He said He had given to these men. This is the great word with which we are familiar through all the writings of John, and indeed through all our New Testament, the word logos, signifying the unified and complete revelation of GOD made through CHRIST Himself. That, fundamentally and inclusively, is the truth in which He prays that men may be sanctified.

In the second statement we have not the same expression, but another carrying another thought: My sayings, that is, such sayings as make application of essential truth in local particulars. If when He spoke of the Word He was referring to the unified and inclusive truth; when He spoke of the sayings, He was referring to the words which He had uttered in application to certain human needs.

We shall understand our Lord's thoughts concerning sanctity in proportion as we know the truth to which He referred when He prayed that we might be sanctified in the truth.

For that purpose we shall consider that matter under the twofold division of the Word as the manifestation of the name; and the sayings as the application of truth, included in the Word, to the needs of men.

The manifestation of the name producing the right attitude to GOD issues in sanctity of being, which is holiness.

The revelation of duty producing right attitude to men issues in sanctity of doing, which is righteousness. Sanctity is holiness and righteousness, two matters which cannot be severed; two matters which I sometimes fear we are in danger of severing.

On one hand, I hear a great deal about holiness, with little reference to righteousness.

On the other hand, I hear a great deal about the necessity for righteousness, with very little reference to holiness. But it is impossible that there ever should be righteousness which is not the outcome of holiness; and it is equally impossible that there should be any holiness which is not expressed in righteousness.

Holiness is rectitude of character.

Righteousness is rectitude of conduct.

Both the ideas are related, and are expressed most perfectly in the word sanctity.

Our Lord in this great prayer uttered His ultimate desire for the sinning men who by faith in Him as Saviour enter into new relationship with GOD. His desire for them is that they may be sanctified in the truth.

We turn

First of all to the Study of sanctity of character by the Name; and

Secondly to sanctity of conduct by the sayings, or moral system, which our Lord has given to us.

We commence then with this First conception of truth, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "I have manifested Thy name unto the men" (John 17:6).

Now to understand this we must take a larger outlook, and remind ourselves of the method and system of this Gospel according to John. It is not a life story, a biography. It is exactly what John declared it to be, the gathering together of certain incidents, of signs in the way of works; of teaching in the form of words; which in their relationship to each other serve to demonstrate the fact that JESUS was the Son of GOD.

When that is borne in mind we shall discover at the commencement of the Gospel a key to the interpretation of the revelation which JESUS gave to us, and which John made clear in the process of his book: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

John was looking back to a past economy, in order that he might draw attention to the new economy. He was reminding those for whom he wrote his Gospel of a previous revelation, of how the law came, - the preposition "by (or through) Moses"; and how - for there was a new revelation, not contradicting the old, but fulfilling it, explaining it, leading out its essential values to ultimate perfection, - "grace and truth came by (or through) Jesus Christ."

I have referred to that key word in order that we may go back to the previous revelation. "The law came by Moses." What was the first word in that law? Not a moral enactment, but a revelation of GOD. When after eighty years of preparation, forty years in Egypt, and forty years in the magnificence of the desert, Moses came to the hour of crisis, and was called to his great work, he was called by the mystic symbolism of a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed, and by a revelation of the GOD Who dwelt in the bush.

As this man Moses, of reverent habit and demeanor, who had learned deep secrets from Nature during the forty years of his shepherd life, drew near to the unusual sight of a bush burning with fire and yet not consumed, a voice said to him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

Then GOD revealed Himself to him by a name; and this is the name, a name which is an announcement of revelation, imperfect, incomplete, "I AM"; and as it appeared as though something were to be added to the essential word, by way of revelation, the word recoiled upon itself. "I AM THAT AM" (Exodus 3:14).

The law came through the man who had received that revelation.

Now I take up this Gospel according to John, and having read that key word, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," I find that its supreme value is not its revelation of all ethical code, but its revelation of a name, its revelation of how through this new Messenger of the covenant, the very Son of GOD Himself, the name was proclaimed; and this prayer of JESUS bears witness to the truth of that assertion, for in the final praying He said to His Father, "I have manifested Thy name."

What then is the name? That name is revealed in the course of the discourses of JESUS, some of them careful and continued, some of them fragmentary and incidental, in which we find great words, characterized at once by sublimity and simplicity.

The words to which I refer are those in which He took again the word that had been spoken incompletely from the splendor of the burning bush, "I AM," and completed the revelation, "I am the Bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the Door," "I am the good Shepherd," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," "I am the true Vine."

Thus He linked the sublime declaration of essential Being to symbols so full of simplicity that all our children love them; the simplest words of human speech. "I am"; the formula of the fundamental fact in the nature of Deity, that GOD is the Self-existent One, without beginning and without support other than that within His own Being; JESUS linked to every-day symbols; - bread, light, a door, a shepherd, a resurrection, a way, a vine.

When His ministry of teaching was complete, the One Who had uttered these words came into the presence of the Father, Who bears the essential and eternal name, and He said: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men."

That manifestation may thus be summarized:

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). GOD Himself as the very bread of life to man. "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12); GOD Himself as the illumination of man's life and pathway. "I am the door" (John 10:9), GOD Himself as the safety of His people. "I am the good Shepherd" (John 10:11), GOD Himself as the Love that cares for His people. "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), GOD Himself as the power by which men shall come to the consummation of purpose, and that in spite of the tragedy of death which results from their sin. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); GOD Himself as the very pathway or

course in which men shall proceed, in order to the fulfillment of that purpose. "I am the vine" (John 15:1), GOD Himself in intimate association with men, making their ministry, perfecting them, and enabling them to fulfill high and holy service.

This was the sevenfold unveiling of the Name, and we at once discover its value to men.

"I am the bread of life" - that is, ability at the disposal of men.

"I am the light" - that is, light or direction upon the pathway for men.

"I am the door" - that is, love, perfect safety for men folded within the enclosure.

"I am the good Shepherd" - that is, care, and perfect rest for all hearts who trust in Him.

"I am the resurrection" - that is, consummation, hope upon the darkest day of sorrow and bereavement.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life"; that is the course or the pathway of the pilgrimage, and consequent confidence even when the sun is blotted out of the heavens.

"I am the true vine"; that is provision for ministry or service, discipline and purging, in order that much fruit may be brought forth.

Such was the manifestation of the name, and in every case it was manifestation through Himself. In every case He was, in human guise and form and fashion, the unveiling of Deity; and as men touched the warm flesh of the Son of Man they were thrilled by contact with GOD through the Son of GOD. And now at the end He said, "I have manifested Thy name" . . . "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" - that is, they have kept it in view, they have observed it.

What, then, is this picture of sanctity? It is that of sanctity of character by the Name.

This revelation produces love in the heart of a believer; love inspires obedience to the things revealed; and, almost without consciousness at first, when the revelation has inspired love, and love has inspired obedience, character becomes holy, because the life is adjusted to the truth concerning GOD. Holiness is not something which we can accurately designate by the impersonal pronoun it. Holiness of character is the attitude of life adjusted towards GOD in response to the revelation of the Name through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

We now pass to the second matter; sanctity of conduct in response to the sayings of JESUS.

All the things to which we have referred constitute the inclusive, unified, final revelation. He is the I AM. Now out of the "I am" of JESUS came His sayings. Sayings are component parts of the whole, uttered for the instruction of individual lives, and social conditions, and immediate requirements.

CHRIST in Himself is the full and final Truth; and even if He had never uttered a precept or a maxim, He had uttered all Truth in Himself. Nevertheless because of the frailty of human life and the finiteness of the human mind, He, the essential Truth, did speak in sayings, in maxims, in instructions; and the supreme collection is to be found, not in John's Gospel, but in Matthew's, in the Manifesto.

The Manifesto is less than the King; all truth is not in the Sermon on the Mount; but it is in the One Who uttered it. But the Sermon on the Mount must be uttered in order that; may be helped in my desire to obey the truth, the revelation of which has called me to the character of holiness, in order that I may express the character of holiness in the conduct of righteousness. He spoke in sayings, in words, in moral and ethical terms; and if we would understand what the sayings of JESUS are, then we must take the whole of the Manifesto, and study it carefully.

There are two master principles which occur in the midst of it: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Gathered around these two principles, are words of direct and immediate application; conditioning individual life, and social life; and revealing the moral standards of the Kingdom of GOD.

Take the First. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees." The contextual interpretation shows that this is rightness towards men and the affairs of this life, as the outcome of right relationship with GOD.

The failure of the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees is revealed in an incidental saying of JESUS in the course of the Manifesto: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1).

That is an illuminative word, it is a startling word. Bring the ordinary morality of the world into the light of that word, and it stands condemned. Rightness, in order that we may be thought well of by men, is condemned in the Christian economy, not in itself, but as being relatively worthless. There is a vast amount of morality which is conditioned by the presence of the policeman; and there is still a vaster amount of morality, on a higher level judged by the ordinary standards of human life, which is conditioned by pride.

It is very valuable for all merely material purposes, but it is condemned. Honesty is the best policy! But the man who is honest merely because it is politic to be honest is a rogue and a rascal at heart.

That is the righteousness which the Lord condemned; the righteousness which is done to be seen of men. What, then, is the righteousness that He inculcated? The righteousness which is done to be seen of GOD; to please GOD whether men understand or not; whether it shall please men or not. His illustrations are as remarkable as His ideal. Alms are to be given, and prayer is to be offered privately; and in fasting men are to go amid the crowds as though they had been to a feast, with brightness upon their faces.

The second principle is expressed in the words, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." We must not interfere with that saying of JESUS, Some people are terribly afraid of criticism, higher or lower, but they indulge in it for themselves when they read that word. Let us interpret the text in relation to its context. When did He say it? Immediately after He had said "Love your enemies."

The second principle of man's relationship to his fellow men is that he is to act towards them by likeness to GOD in love. The command is thus superlative, rather than minimized by its connection with the command to love our enemies.

This is sanctity of conduct. Love for the Lord inspires us to receive His word, to accept it as authoritative, as final; and the reception of the word thus expresses itself in obedience, which is conduct love-impulsed. Thus righteousness is life adjusted to the truth about GOD, expressing itself in conduct towards men.

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

This is the word which He gave; the manifestations of the Name, the sayings which He uttered; these constitute the moral code which men must obey. "Sanctify them through thy truth." That was His prayer. And His estimate of sanctification is that holiness of character which results from the soul responsive to GOD as revealed in CHRIST; and that righteousness of conduct which grows from such character, the expression of relationship to GOD in a man's dealings with his fellow men.

Finally this teaching was included in a prayer. He was praying for these men, and in the selfsame prayer He prayed for us. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

We are of that host and company who have believed through the apostolic word. The ultimate value of His prayer is found in the opening words, "Father, the hour is come." What hour? And again there need not be and must not be any speculation. Throughout this Gospel according to John, that hour is constantly referred to. When His mother came to Him at the First sign, He said, "Woman, what have I to do with

thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). They could not arrest Him "for his hour was not yet come." (John 8:20).

At last, under the very shadow of the Cross, He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1).

The hour was the hour of His passion. He was praying first for continued fellowship on the part of His Father with Himself in that ultimate darkness of the Cross, and the victory of the resurrection that lay beyond; and in that prayer He uttered this petition.

That first petition of the prayer was answered. His Father glorified Him by raising Him from among the dead, by completing the Exodus; and now we can go through that answer of death and resurrection in the person of our Lord Himself, and therefore sanctity is possible to us. Had there been none other than the manifestation of the name in a life, and the uttering of the law in precepts, I should have closed the book and should have said, the ideal is stupendous and marvelous, but I can never attain unto it. But the One Who manifested the name, the One Who uttered the moral code, was glorified in the mystery of death and resurrection; and placed all His resources at the disposal of sinful men, that they might live the life of sanctity, that they might turn to GOD, and their life be adjusted to Him in holiness; that in the power or such adjustment they might turn back to the affairs of everyday life, in office and mart and shop and household, and wherever they may be, to live towards men in love, in answer to the impulse of the life adjusted towards GOD, which is the life of righteousness.

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