

Sanctification (Conclusion)

by J.C. Ryle

True sanctification is a genuine change of heart that shows itself in a person's habitual working of a new heavenly principle within, which runs through all their daily conduct.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, John 17:17, Galatians 5:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

J.C. Ryle concludes his sermon on sanctification by emphasizing that true sanctification is not merely about outward appearances or temporary feelings, but rather a deep, transformative work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. He outlines the visible evidence of sanctification, which includes a genuine respect for God's law, a commitment to Christ's teachings, and the active and passive graces of love and submission. Ryle warns against the dangers of superficial religiosity and urges believers to pursue a high standard of holiness, recognizing that without sanctification, there is no salvation. He encourages self-examination and a commitment to living out one's faith authentically, as true holiness leads to true happiness.

Transcript

"Sanctify them through Thy truth."

John 17:17

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

1 Thess. 4:3

I now proceed to consider the visible evidence of sanctification. In a word, what are the visible marks of a sanctified man? What may we expect to see in him?

1. True sanctification does not consist in talk about religion. This is a point that ought never to be forgotten. People hear so much of Gospel truth that they contract an unholy familiarity with its words and phrases. Sometimes they talk so fluently about its doctrines that you might think them true Christians. In fact, it is sickening and disgusting to hear the cool and flippant language that many pour out about conversion while they are notoriously serving sin or living for the world.

2. True sanctification does not consist in temporary religious feelings. Mission services and revival meetings attract great attention and produce a great sensation, but these things have attendant dangers as well as advantages. Wherever wheat is sown, the devil is sure to sow tares. Many, it may be feared, appear moved and touched, roused under the preaching of the Gospel, while in reality their hearts are not changed at all. A kind of animal excitement from the contagion of seeing others weeping, rejoicing, or affected is the true account of their case. Let us urge everyone who exhibits new interest in religion to be content with nothing short of the deep, solid, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. Better a thousand times to begin more slowly and continue in the word steadfastly than to begin in a hurry, without counting the cost, and by and by look back and return to the world. I declare I know no state of soul more dangerous than to imagine we are born again and sanctified by the Holy Ghost because we have picked up a few religious feelings.

3. True sanctification does not consist in outward formalism and external devoutness. This is an enormous delusion, but unhappily a very common one. Thousands imagine true holiness is to be seen in constant attendance at Church services, reception of the Lord's Supper, observance of fasts and saints' days, multiplied bowings and gestures during public worship, self-imposed austerities and petty self-denials, wearing peculiar dresses, and the use of pictures and crosses. I am afraid that in many cases this external religiousness is made a substitute for inward holiness and am quite certain that it falls utterly short of sanctification of heart.

4. Sanctification does not consist in retirement from our place in life and the renunciation of our social duties. Hundreds of hermits have buried themselves in some wilderness, and thousands of men and women have shut themselves up within the walls of monasteries and convents under the vain idea that by so doing they would escape sin and become eminently holy. They have forgotten that no bolts and bars can keep the devil out and that, wherever we go, we carry that root of all evil--our own hearts. True holiness does not make a Christian evade difficulties but face and overcome them. Christ would have his people show that his grace is not a mere hothouse plant, which can only thrive under shelter, but a strong hardy thing which can flourish in every relation of life.

5. Sanctification does not consist in the occasional performance of right actions. It is the habitual working of a new heavenly principle within, which runs through all a man's daily conduct both in great things and in small. A true saint, like Hezekiah, will be whole-hearted.

6. Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual respect to God's law and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as the rule of life. He that pretends to be a saint while he sneers at the Ten Commandments and thinks nothing of lying, hypocrisy, swindling, ill-temper, slander, drunkenness, and breach of the seventh commandment, is under a fearful delusion. He will find it hard to prove that he is a "saint" in the last day!

7. Genuine sanctification will show itself in a habitual endeavor to do Christ's will and to live by his practical precepts. These precepts are to be found scattered everywhere throughout the four Gospels, and especially in the Sermon on the Mount. He that supposes they were spoken without the intention of promoting holiness and that he need not attend to them in his daily life, is little better than a lunatic. At any rate, he is a grossly ignorant person.

8. Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual attention to the active graces which our Lord so beautifully exemplified, especially the grace of charity. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you

love one another." A sanctified man will try to do good in the world and to lessen the sorrow and increase the happiness of all around him. He will aim to be like his Master, full of kindness and love to everyone; and this not in word only, but by deeds, actions, and self-denying works, as he has opportunity.

9. Lastly, genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual attention to the passive graces of Christianity. By these I mean those graces which are specially shown in submission to the will of God and in bearing and forbearing toward one another. This is the one piece of profession which the Lord's prayer requires us to make: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." This is the point which occupies one third of the list of the fruits of the Spirit, supplied by St. Paul. Nine are named and three of these--longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness--are unquestionably passive graces. The passive graces are no doubt harder to attain than the active ones, but they are precisely those that have the greatest influence on the world. People who are habitually giving way to peevish and cross tempers in daily life, are constantly sharp with their tongues, are disagreeable to all around them, who are spiteful, vindictive, revengeful, and malicious, know little about sanctification.

What practical reflections should be raised in our minds from the above? For one thing, let us all awake to a sense of the perilous state of many professing Christians. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Without sanctification, there is no salvation. For another thing, let us make sure work of our own condition and never rest until we feel and know that we are "sanctified" ourselves. What are our tastes, choices, liking, and inclinations? Are we sanctified or not? If not, the fault is all our own.

Let us never be ashamed of making much of sanctification and contending for a high standard of holiness. While some are satisfied with a miserably low degree of attainment and others are not ashamed to live without any holiness at all, let us stand fast and follow after eminent holiness and recommend it boldly to others. Whatever others may say, let us be convinced that holiness is happiness, and that the man who gets through life most comfortably is the sanctified man. They have solid comforts which the world can neither give nor take away. It was said by One who cannot lie, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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