

Sanctification -- What It Is

by J.H. Collins

Sanctification is the process of being made holy and cleansed from sin through the enablement of God and the power of the blood of Christ.

Scripture: Leviticus 11:44, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 4:18, Revelation 22:14

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification"

Description

J.H. Collins preaches about the importance of sanctification and holiness in the Christian journey, emphasizing that perfect love casts out fear and the need for believers to be fully consecrated and cleansed from all sin to experience Christian perfection. The sermon delves into the two-fold meaning of sanctification - consecration and purification - highlighting that God enables believers to become holy and fulfill His commandments. The Scriptures teach that holiness is attainable and essential for believers to see the Lord, presenting it as the heritage of God's people and emphasizing that human nature can exist without sin through Christ's cleansing power.

Transcript

The bird that soars on highest wing

Builds on the ground its lowly nest;

And she that doth most sweetly sing,

Sings in the shade when all things rest.

In lark and nightingale we see

What honor hath humility.

The saint that wears heaven's highest crown

In deepest adoration bends;

The weight of glory bows him down

The most when most his soul ascends.

Nearest the throne itself must be

The footstool of humility.

-- Southern Churchmen --

"Perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4:18).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5:23).

When our Saviour was made an offering for sin, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." "The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way of the holiest of all" was then "made manifest." It becomes us, then, humbly, and yet boldly, to inquire, "What does it mean to be sanctified?"

The words "perfect," "sanctify," "sanctification," "holy," "holiness," are used as referring to the same state of Christian experience. These three words and their equivalents are found in the Bible about six hundred times. The word "perfect" -- from the prefix per, through, and facere, to make; literally, to make through -- means finished, complete. The word telios, which is rendered "Perfect" in the New Testament, means full, entire, as opposed to what is partial or limited, from the noun telos, an end. Sanctify is from sanctus, holy, and facers, to make; literally, to make holy. The word in the original is hagiadzoo; means to consecrate, to cleanse, to purify. We desire to emphasize this two-fold meaning of the word. It means, first, to consecrate or set apart from a common to a sacred use; as, "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." (Gen. 2:3). Second, it means to cleanse, to purify, as, "And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5:23).

A great many are willing to be consecrated. Many persons talk much of consecration, but say but little of sanctification; whereas consecration is only one element or a prerequisite to sanctification. To be wholly sanctified is to be fully consecrated to God, and to be cleansed from all sin. The removal of sin makes room for grace. It is said that "nature abhors a vacuum." As in the natural so in the spiritual world. When the soul is emptied of all sin, then it becomes filled with love to God and love to men. This is what constitutes Christian perfection. This perfect love does not enable us to keep all the law in its letter. For that reason we do not use the phrase "sinless perfection." But it does enable us to keep the law in all its spirit, and that is the only requirement made of us. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10). "All the law is fulfilled in one word. (Gal. 5:14). This is "the royal law" -- the law of liberty, the law by which "if the Son of man shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

What do the Scriptures teach in reference to this state of holiness, or Christian perfection? The doctrine of holiness runs through the Bible like the veins and arteries run through the human body. If we take holiness out, we will bleed the Bible to death. Nothing which God commands must be set aside as unreasonable or impossible. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:14). A short time ago, while calling at the house of a brother minister, I observed upon the floor a small Sunday school card. It had printed upon it the short motto: "His commandments are not grievous." (John 5:3). A blessed motto to wear upon our hearts, a valuable help in reading the Scriptures, to remember that "His commandments are not grievous." And what does God command? "For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44). "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Pet. 1:15). These are examples of the many scriptures that might be quoted. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thess. 4:3). Whosoever, therefore, antagonizes

sanctification antagonizes the will of God.

He not only commands, but he exhorts to holiness: "And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." But how could Paul exhort his brethren to go on unto perfection unless it was possible to reach it. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1). Here the plain teaching of God urges to a full cleansing; but we are at a loss to understand words if a full cleansing is an impossibility. The reason why holiness is not impossible is because God will enable believers to become holy. He has promised to do so: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him are amen." What has God promised? "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (Ezek. 36:25). Now, if the Lord will cleanse his people from all filthiness, and from all idols, how much filthiness and how many idols will remain? He says in the same chapter: "I will also save you from all your uncleanness." What is the meaning of the word "all?" "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is a precious declaration, so plain that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27). As the laundryman washes the garments that are soiled, so Christ will cleanse the souls that are committed to him. He uses the powerful application of his blood, and he proposes to wash out every spot and to smooth out every wrinkle. Now, then, to say that the souls thus purified are still unclean is dishonoring to the blood of Christ.

Our Saviour prayed that his disciples might be sanctified. Surely he did not pray in vain. Paul prayed that his Thessalonian brethren might be sanctified "wholly, and preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He also prayed that the brethren at Ephesus might be "filled with all the fulness of God." What means this prayer, what means the apostle, what means the Saviour, what means the Bible, if this high and holy state be not presented as the heritage of the people of God? "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). "Holiness unto the Lord" is the great "central idea of Christianity" as the sun is the center of our solar system. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14).

In what moral condition do we find men who are unrenewed by divine grace? Both sinful and sinning; "the whole world lieth in wickedness." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Does the attainment of holiness destroy any essential organ, appetite, or principle of human nature? It does not. It only cleanses from all sin. We understand, then, that human nature may exist entire without sin; or in other words, that sin is not an essential part of human nature. Can you explain this further by illustration? Take a glass of clear water; drop into it a teaspoonful of poison; now the water has become poisoned -- i. e., the water has united with poison in the glass; but it is in the power of the chemist to separate these two substances, and then the water exists perfect, free from poison. So the evil has poisoned human nature by the introduction of sin. It is the work of Christ to "destroy the work of the devil" by removing the poison of sin. Then human nature exists perfect -- i. e., separate from sin. Have we any examples of human nature that never had any sin? We have. Adam, before his fall, had human nature without sin; for he was created in the image of God, "which is righteousness and true holiness." Christ also possessed human nature entirely, yet "he was holy, harmless and separate from sinners."

Do those who are cleansed from all sin enjoy that perfection of human nature as represented by Adam? They do not; only in reference to freedom from sin. That which is cleansed from all sin has no sin remaining. Can you explain this further by illustration? Here are two garments white and clean; we place them side by side; one of them is entirely new, and never has been soiled nor injured by use; the other, however, has been not only soiled, but worn and injured in its texture; washing has taken away all impurity, but has not removed the rents from the garment. The two garments are exactly alike so far as cleanliness is concerned; but they are unlike in other respects -- the one is a new, strong garment, clean without washing; the other is frail and worn, but clean by washing.

So Adam, having never sinned, enjoyed a purity of heart, his power never having been impaired by sin; while Christian perfection is human nature enfeebled by the effect of the fall, but washed in the blood of the Lamb. Blessed state! "These are robed in whiteness, clothed in brightness." Glorious, indeed! It awakens the joy of angels, and starts a song upon earth that shall be sung in heaven forever: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5, 6).

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