

Spiritual Development

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and the development of Christian virtues after sanctification.

Scripture: Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22, Colossians 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 1 Peter 1:15, 2 Peter 1:3, 1 John 3:2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Sanctification"

Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of soul progress and maturity after sanctification, urging Christians to continually develop and add to the Christian graces already within them. The sermon emphasizes the three stages of the Christian experience: conversion, sanctification, and the maturing of graces for eternity. Hames highlights the need for believers to be separated from corrupt nature through the cleansing Blood and to partake in the divine nature by allowing the Holy Ghost to work within them.

Transcript

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped, the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Pet. 1:3-11.

The above scripture was addressed to a class of Christians who were not only saved, but sanctified wholly. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, denotes an act definitely performed in the past. For this very reason, because of what had been done in them by the Holy Ghost, the Apostle exhorts them not to rest content with merely a clean heart, but to add to and develop all the Christian graces already begun in them.

There is no end to the soul progress, enrichment and maturity after being sanctified. Sanctification washes away all impurity and puts the soul in a healthy state to grow. There are three stages in the Christian experience:

First, when the soul is converted, new life is imparted, new affections, new desires, motive and dispositions.

Second, when the soul is sanctified by the cleansing Blood through the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Third, when the graces and fruit of the Christian experience mature and ripen for eternity. It is just as wrong to neglect this as the first two. The last stage is sadly neglected by a great many professors of Holiness.

"Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The word "escape" used here by the Apostle is the same word spoken by the angels concerning Lot escaping out of the corruption of Sodom, by fleeing to the mountain. Believers are to be separated from the corrupt, fallen nature by the cleansing Blood, until there is nothing within that will lean towards temptations. God wants to cure us by the mighty purging, fiery baptism of the Holy Ghost.

We hear about fireproof buildings and waterproof vessels. God wants to make His saints sin-proof by taking all the Adamic, earthly nature out of them.

"Ye might be partakers of the divine nature." Here is a truth that is too deep for human brains to fathom. Just as the Holy Ghost formed the spotless, pure body of the Son of God and blended the human and the Divine, so He is still forming Christ within us, the hope of glory.

This was beautifully set forth in the types of the fine flour offering mingled with oil. The fine flour is typical of His humanity, which was fine, smooth and even, no roughness or coarseness in it. The oil is typical of His divinity. As the oil was worked into the flour, so the Holy Ghost imparts the Divine nature and softens our hearts, conscience and affections with the heavenly oil. There is no such thing as real Sanctification apart from the Holy Ghost.

"Besides this, add to your faith, virtue" -- that is, besides being saved and sanctified. All these graces which are already in the regenerated heart like a grain of corn has wrapped up within its heart the stalk, ear, roots and foliage, but needs developing and unfolding. The graces are imparted in Regeneration, perfected in Sanctification.

First, we are to add to our faith courage. That means to dare and to do; dare to stand by your God-given convictions. God has no use for cowards; the demand is for heroes.

In this compromising, easy-going age, when the modern pulpit is tainted with higher criticism, there never was such a demand for men with God-given convictions and a burning message for the day. Dare to be a Daniel, and when the smoke of the battle is blown away, God and His angels will be hovering near. When Martin Luther was brought before the authorities of Germany for the stand he took against the Romish Church, the powers of earth and hell were arrayed against him. The Emperor asked him two questions. First, "Did you write these books?" He answered, "I did." "Will you recant?" He answered, "Unless I am convinced by proofs from the Holy Spirit or by sound reasons, and my judgment by this means is commanded by God's Word, I cannot and I will not retract anything. . . . Here I stand. I can do no otherwise. So help me God! Amen." He won a victory for God and truth that will live forever.

Add to your courage, knowledge. We need an intelligent Holiness, where we will not throw our lives away in fruitless effort, spending our energy attacking something useless. Then, it means more than a book knowledge or knowledge of science. It means an inwrought assurance or heavenly wisdom, the ability to apply our lives in the right way. The reason some people fail in the Christian life is not because they do not live straight, but they lack tact and adaptability. "And to your knowledge, temperance," means a Divine poise, self-control, where all the body, with its desires, appetites and passions, are brought under subjection to the higher spiritual nature. Temperance has a broader, deeper meaning than just to abstain from wrong things. It means the right use of legitimate, good things -- not lopsided, stressing some non-essential out of proportion of holy living. Some people are very strict when it comes to the dress question, which is right in its place, but are very slack and loose when it comes to controlling their tongues.

And to temperance, patience. Here is a rare grace, but a needy one. Patience is the power to bear anything with an evenness of spirit and sweetness of temper. Patience never scolds nor answers in an angry voice. It always hurts the soul worse that talks harsh, than the person spoken to. Harshness and unkindness do not live in the same breast with patience. When one comes in, the other goes out.

One writer has said, "Patience is perfect love in full bloom in the soul from January to January." It is Holiness being tested. All kinds of excuses are made for getting impatient. Some say, "It doesn't last long." Neither does powder last long when it comes in touch with fire. The beauty of being sanctified is that the stirring of the carnal mind and gunpowder -- like nature is taken out. It is not cursing and swearing that is hurting Holiness; it is having spells in the home. An impatient mother went to answer a knock at the door. A little tot clung to her skirt. She slapped it, and when she returned, the child had lost its balance, stumbled and fell in a pot of boiling water in front of the fire--murdered through an impatient spirit.

"Add to your patience, godliness -- Godlikeness." We become like the things we admire the most. Live in His presence, drink so much of the Divine nature, until we become Godlike in our nature - not like Him in omnipotence, but in spirit.

At the World's Exposition, some years ago, there was one of the largest clocks in the world. The long hand measured sixty feet. When it would strike out the hours, it jarred buildings for blocks. At the base of this great clock was the smallest watch in the world. When the big clock struck twelve, the hands of this little time-piece pointed at twelve. And so the soul can be so linked up with the Divine until it can keep time with the heavenly world.

"And to godliness, brotherly kindness." It pays to be kind. Nothing wins like kindness. This is a Divine kindness that the Apostle is talking about that must be imparted. There is a lot of so-called kindness today that waits until a poor fellow dies, and then sends a lot of cut flowers to be placed on his grave. Many a husband waits until a wife dies to give flowers, but what good will costly flowers do placed over a cold, still heart? It is a bouquet now, with the words "I love you" that is needed. That will cause the lifeblood to rush to the faded cheek.

"And to brotherly kindness, charity -- Divine love." Notice the Apostle put this last because it is the richest and deepest thing in Christian experience. It is God's highest and best gift. It will put a sweetness in every bitter cup and a rainbow of promise across every dark cloud. Wesley says: "The Heaven of Heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are getting out the royal way."

"For if these things be in you -- that is, all these graces of the spirit -- and abound, like an overflowing river -- they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Here is a sure guarantee that we will not be unfruitful nor one-sided in our Christian experience.

Dr. A. B. Simpson says the word "add" is the same as the Greek term *epichorego*. From this old word our expressions "chorus" and "chorus-choir" are derived. "Chorus unto your faith and life these beautiful graces. Bring them all in tune and work them out in harmony and praise, so that your life shall be a doxology of joy and thanksgiving." This finally brings us to the abundant entrance. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The Apostle seems to be alluding to the triumphal procession which was practiced among the Romans. In her balmy days, when she stood at the head of the nations of the world, her soldiers would go forth and gain a very decisive victory by conquering a province and then return home to receive abundant entrance. Dr. Adam Clarke describes the scenes as follows: 'On such occasions the General was usually clad in a rich, purple robe, interwoven with figures of gold, setting forth the grandeur of his achievements; his buckskins were beset with pearls, and he wore a crown, which at first was of laurel, but was afterwards of pure gold. In one hand he had a branch of laurel, the emblem of victory, and in the other his truncheon. He was carried in a magnificent chariot adorned with ivory and plates of gold, and usually drawn by two white horses. Musicians led the processions and played triumphant pieces in praise of the General. The people strewed flowers and shouted: 'Io, triumphant.'"

If there was nothing else in the blessing of Holiness but a triumphant death, it would be worth all of our seeking, and, if necessary, dying a hundred deaths in order to obtain it.

When John Inskip, the warrior of the Holiness Movement, lay dying, just before he passed away he raised a palmetto fan over his head and shouted, "Triumphant! Triumphant! Triumphant!" The sainted Alford Cookman said: "I am sweeping through the gates washed in the blood of the Lamb." Dr. S. A. Keen said: "How unspeakably precious Jesus has been," and was gone.

Nearly one hundred years ago there lived one of the holiest men about whom I ever read, named Valentine Cook. This man lived so close to God that at his death God gave a sanctified farmer ten miles away a vision of his home-going. He said he heard an angel shouting: "Valentine Cook is coming Home." (They know us by name.) And as Brother Cook entered through the gates into the City, the angels went forth to meet him, and Heaven's music started, and there was great rejoicing at his home-coming.

This corresponds exactly with Peter's epistle when the saints have an abundance entrance.

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