

The Pattern of Sanctification Part 2 - the Example of Christ

by John Murray

The sermon emphasizes the significance of Christ's example in our lives, revealing God's holiness and our responsibility to serve others, and bringing to expression the primary and ultimate path of sanctification.

Duration: 53:27

Scripture: Matthew 20:27

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following the example of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. He highlights that Jesus is the supreme revelation of God's will for us and the ultimate example of sanctification. The speaker mentions that Jesus' sacrificial death and his call to serve others are key aspects of his example. He also emphasizes that the example of Jesus is not just a generalization, but it should be applied to specific practical situations in our lives. The speaker references Bible verses such as Matthew 20:27-28, Mark 10:44-45, 1 Peter 2:21, and Philippians 2:5 to support his points.

Transcript

In the relevance of his example to us, this will become completely well-attained in its measure. Well, we'll proceed. I said that in no other way could God's holiness, as relevant to our responsibility, be so effectively revealed.

Now, this is why, in the concrete and practical, the example of our Lord has incomparable significance. Incomparable significance. One of the most striking words of our Lord in this connection is, of course, in Matthew 27 and 28 and Mark 10, 44 and 45, Whosoever would be first among you, let him be servant of all, for even the Son of Man came not to be minister unto but be ministered, and to give his life a ransom for many.

And, of course, the apostles could enjoin to the same effect, for hereunto where ye call, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps. First Peter 2, 21, and all, of course, Philippians 2, 5, Let this mine be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. This appeal to Christ's example, on the part of our Lord himself, and on the part of the apostles, sets forth some very important lessons.

There are four lessons that I'm going to mention, to be derived from this appeal to our Lord's example. Four lessons. First, the example of our Lord is abused, both by himself and by his disciples, to enforce the elementary duties of humble service to others, unselfish considerateness for others, patient endurance of suffering, Christian liberality.

Yes, it is not by way of generalization that the example of our Lord is pleaded, but his example is brought to bear upon the concrete details of practical life. You remember when Jesus, in his old teaching, appealed to the example of the Father, Matthew 5, verse 8, it was for the purpose of enforcing the practical duty in our social relationship. So here, in connection with our Lord, when he appeals to his own example, but when others appeal to his instance, in connection with practical details of obligation, social relationships exclusively, to that by way of very social example.

Then second, the most striking feature of these passages, which appeal is made to our Lord's example, the most striking feature is that the climactic events of Jesus' messianic accomplishment are abused to enforce the duties that devolve upon us. This shows that the most transcendent truths of the gospel, namely the accomplishments which lay at the center of Jesus' commission and commitment, bear directly upon the pattern by which our life is to be governed and regulated. Quite often, the transcendent truths of the gospel are regarded as impractical in their bearing.

What we find is that they are brought to bear, these transcendent truths, are brought to bear upon what would be called the most menial of our obligations. It is a utterly distorted consideration of doctrine to ethics that supposes the ethical demand can ever be divorced from the transcendent truths of our faith. It is not simply that ethical demand is based upon doctrine, not simply that it is based upon doctrine, but that ethical demand finds its pattern in its urge and incentive.

Now third, third lesson, we find in these passages the differentiation, the differentiation which is parallel to the differentiation we found already in respect of likeness to God. Now with that, we give the differentiation which is necessary in respect of likeness to God. In these passages, the supreme and incomparable actions of our Lord, supreme and incomparable actions are appealed to as the pattern, as the example for our disposition and action.

Now it lies on the face of these texts that the actions which induce in us conformity are not actions which we are represented as performing, I say they are not actions which we are represented as performing. For example, in the ransom passages of the Gospels, our Lord appealed to the fact that he gave his life a ransom, he gave his life a ransom as the supreme example of ministry to others, of service to others. But there isn't the remotest suggestion that we are to give our lives a ransom.

Again, Peter, 1 Peter 2, can say that Christ gave us an example that we should follow his steps, but he doesn't allow us to think that in following his steps we participate in what is Jesus' climactic accomplishment. For Peter advises us in that very passage that Jesus' climactic accomplishment is all excluded. For he says, who his own self bare a single body upon the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we were healed, 1 Peter 2, 24.

Again, Paul can say, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, and then go on to appeal to the successive steps of our Lord's self-humiliation. But it is perfectly clear that Paul is not enjoining upon us actions which reproduce or repeat or copy the transcendent actions of which our Lord was the subject. According to this passage, 7 through 7 and 8, verses 7 and 8, Philippians 2 and 8, of Jesus alone could it be said, of him alone could it be said, Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with

God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant.

So it is said, there is this differentiation. And it is a complete misunderstanding of these things, to interpret them as meaning that the example of our Lord involves for us a reproduction, a repetition of what Jesus himself had foretold. Now, Paul, thank you.

You were just a little slower. A little slower, eh? Well, did you get the point under three? Yes. Thank you.

Well, now, Paul. This is my final lesson. It is, however, the uniqueness of our Lord's accomplishment, the incomparable uniqueness of his accomplishment, arising from the uniqueness of his passion and the uniqueness of his commission, that infests supreme relevance.

Supreme relevance. His commission and task were such as only God manifest in the flesh could. His example bears upon us in the realm of our vocation.

The example of Christ brings to expression the primary and ultimate path by which the sanctification of believers is regulated and brought to fruition. I say, brings to expression the primary and ultimate path by which our sanctification is regulated and brought to fruition. The example of Christ has supreme relevance to us because it was in the flesh, he gave us, the life of this world encompassed by its temptations and trials.

It was as truly human, he manifested. He was manifest as Paul says, in the flesh, but he was also divine, and thus his example does not fall one whit, does not fall short one whit. What we have already found to be the ultimate and primary pattern or norm of sanctification, namely, likeness to God.

The fact that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the effulgence of his glory and the transcript of his being is never interrupted or suspended in his heaven. Never suspended. All this is humiliation manifesting.

Yes. As divine can he make a differentiation in his acts? Well, you couldn't say that Jesus manifested in his self-manifestation. He was acting simply as divine and merely as divine and in other words, merely as human.

He as the God-man is always acting, always revealing himself. Now in certain situations, that which he does, he does particularly in respect. I'll proceed now at the point where I left off.

The question was, the process of sanctification then, I finished these four lessons, now this is the conclusion. The process of sanctification can be described in its fullest meaning as transformation into the image of Christ. The goal of the Father's predestination is conformity to the image of the Son.

And consequently, sanctification must be patterned after the image, conformity to which is the final end. Patterned after the image, conformity to which is the final end. There is no incompatibility between likeness to Christ and likeness to the Father.

No incompatibility. John, you remember, 1 John 3, 1 through 3, can define the consummation of the sanctifying process as likeness to the Father. 1 John 3, 2. Don't need to repeat.

Seeing the Father as he is, does not refer to physical state, but to the fullness and clearness of the knowledge of the Father. The fullness and clearness of the knowledge of the Father, that will follow upon understanding undimmed by sin and the revelation of the full splendor of the Father's glory. Believers

then, to the full extent of their finite capacity, will be irradiated by the glory of the Father.

And this irradiation, this irradiation will be the perfect reflection of God's glory. That is, in finite realm, it will be the perfect reflection of God's glory. And that is just why.

Of God's glory. That is, in finite realm, it will be the perfect reflection of God's glory. And that is just why.

The people of God will then be fully conformed to the image of the Son. It is with the glory of the Father that the Son himself is glorified. And when believers are also glorified with that same glory, there must be the conformity.

The conformity by which the Son is the firstborn among many brethren. Now, still dealing with the example of Christ's conformity to His image, we must ask the question, how does this take place? How does this conformity take place? As we think of definitive sanctification, definitive sanctification, this basically consists, as we noted already, in union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

And that simply means that believers, at the inception of this relationship to Christ, have been conformed to His death and resurrection. Nothing could be more significant in this connection, I say, nothing could be more significant in this connection than the Apostle's word, Romans 6, 5, For if we have become grown together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Here, the term likeness points to the very conception with which we are now concerned, namely pattern.

So the inception of sanctification is in terms of conformity. Conformity to Christ. More specifically, it is conformity to that which is central in the redemptive accomplishment of the Incarnate Son, namely His death and resurrection.

Conformity to what is central in the redemptive accomplishment. So you see, the concept of likeness, of conformity, is basic in the pattern as it applies to definitive sanctification. And it is the pattern of Christ.

Then, thinking of progressive sanctification, conformity, of course, bears even more, say, conformity, the idea of conformity of likeness, bears even more broadly upon progressive sanctification. Because progressive sanctification has its final ishto in that complete conformity. It is the goal of predestination.

The whole redemptive process lies between predestination and consolation. To a large extent, the progress of sanctification is dependent upon increasing understanding and appropriation of the implications of identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Dependent upon the increasing understanding and appropriation of the fact that we died with Christ and rose with Him again in His resurrection.

And nothing is more relevant to progressive sanctification than the reckoning, the reckoning of this relationship, the banking upon it. And when Paul contemplates the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and the hope of the resurrection, nothing is more characteristic of his preoccupation than to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death, Philippians 3.10. In that passage, Paul has his mind upon the pride of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. His thought is focused upon the consolation, resurrection to life, if by any means I may attain unto resurrection and death.

And what is focal? What is focal in his thought? Precisely the same relationship as Philippians 3.10 clearly indicates. In a word, therefore, it is as we have fellowship in Christ's sufferings, we are conformed to His death, that we may entertain the assurance of resurrection to life and reach forth for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We may reach forth for that prize.

However, there is much more involved in the way by which this progressive conformity takes place than that upon which we have just now reflected, namely, union with Christ in His death and resurrection. I come back again, 2 Corinthians 3.18, because there Paul speaks of being transformed, transfigured into the image of Christ from glory to glory, glory to glory. And the way in which this transfiguration takes place, this metamorphosis takes place, is by befalling as in a glass the glory of the Lord, reflecting the glory of the Lord.

The thought is clear that it is by adoring encounter with the glory of Christ that the saints take on the character that belongs to Him. I say, by adoring encounter with the glory of Christ, they take on the character. Now, of course, there are supernatural agencies at work here for our transcendental ability to diagnose, but the means by which this work of grace is won are clearly indicated in this passage.

The means clearly indicated in this passage when coordinated with others. The glory of Christ is portrayed for us in the pages of Scripture, and outside of that portrayal, no light of His glory shines upon our path or into our hearts. The Holy Spirit illumines our minds and awakens our hearts to behold His glory.

That is His prerogative. It is even indicated in this passage, in the context, and even in the final word of this passage. And consequently, the unveiling of the glory of Christ by the illumination of the Holy Spirit constrain enough the responses of adoration, of love, of obedience, and communion.

This glory of Christ fills our minds, captivates our hearts, constrains our will, and in ways appropriate, appropriate to each aspect of our personality and to each demand arising for us. We are transformed, transformed so that the fashion of this present world is displaced. I say the fashion and the pattern of conformity to this present world displaced by conformity to Him who thus captivates faith, love.

Now that Christ, in the manifestation of His glory, should be forecovered in adoration, in love and affection. There is no prejudice to the Father or to the Holy Spirit, no prejudice. Because it is in the face of the glory of God the Father is with us.

He is the effulgence of the Father's glory. He is the effulgence of the Father's glory. And therefore He could say Himself, He that hath seen Me, ye have seen the Father.

Again, it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. That is His most characteristic work in the continuing economy of salvation. So that when Christ is spoken, when He is honored, the other persons who got it are likewise honored.

And the more that believers take on the character of His self-manifestation disclosed to us, in the only revelation which we possess, namely that of Scripture, we take on the character of that likeness which is the ultimate and primary part of the all sanctifying process. We can see therefore that there is a perfect convergence of all the persons of the Godhead in that perfect believers which finally will go conformantly to Father in virtue and goodness. We must never forget that in this process of conformation, becoming conformed, this process of conformation to the image of Christ, to the likeness of God the Father, it never takes place.

On our part, it's true as I just said, that supernatural factors are at work here. Supernatural factors that completely escape our diagnosis, our understanding. It is only by concentrated application to that self-manifestation provided for us in the data of biblical revelation that we come into this encounter with the glory of the Lord.

It is only as all the energies of our being are enlisted in the exercises of adoration, of love, of obedience, that we can come to the prize of the divine calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now that finishes that. The other topic that remains is the goal of sanctification.

I have no time to deal with that, but in hell it's really detailed. Only there are new details that will have to be dealt with. If you are going to deal with sanctification, I hope you will be preserving your daily journey.

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