

The Progressive Aspect of Sanctification

by John Murray

John Murray's sermon explores the progressive nature of sanctification, emphasizing the believer's active role in growing towards Christlikeness through the Holy Spirit's power.

Duration: 51:59

Scripture: Ephesians 4:12

Topics: "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Ephesians 4:12-16, which emphasizes the importance of progressive edification in the body of Christ. The passage highlights the role of Christ in uniting and supplying the whole body of believers. The goal is for all believers to come to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, reaching maturity and conformity to the measure of Christ. The means to achieve this progression is through the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, who are called to perfect the saints for the work of ministry and the edification of the body of Christ.

Transcript

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray. Searching word, I enter into our hearts and our consciences.

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and the proofs of instruction are the way of life. May we receive Thy rebuke and correct us, O Lord, but with judgment. Not in anger lest Thou bring us to nothing, but do Thou recruit us, and do Thou grant that we may receive the reproof with humility.

And do Thou grant also that we may be led more and more before Thy presence. And so, when we take account still in here, in the believer, and take account of the fact that he has not yet attained to the goal appointed for him, the condition of the believer is never static, never static. It is always one of progression that is both negative and positive.

That is the temporary mortification. So, first of all, they are to them because they occur in countenance. The once for all death to sin is in the foreground.

That being Romans 6 and the early part of Romans 7, upon the definitive transition, he died to sin. He died to sin. However, in Romans 8.13, the apostle addresses believers.

He says, But if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Ye are putting to death the sin, if the deeds of the body ye shall live. But the agency of putting to death the deeds of the body, an

exercise which we might logically put to death.

Romans 6, Paul has said, The body and sin have been put to death. The apostle says that it is only in the strength of conduct. For he says, It is nevertheless an activity in which the believer is to be.

It is very similar to that of preceding context. The accent falls on dying with Christ. Definitive.

We ourselves are not. Colossians 2.20 If ye died with Christ, to the hood, from the hoodlums of the world, why as living in the world do you subject yourselves to ordinances? The same truth as you find in Roman formula is fact. And then again, Paul says, For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

And then we come to verse 5. Put to death therefore the members which are upon the earth. Fornication, uncleanness, Passion, lust, Courageousness, which is idolatry. Put to death.

This exhortation, put to death, put to death, is one that the wisest man that hath a diabolical proposition, which precedeth, ye died with Christ from the hood, ye died, the doctrine, and we, probably, but, as in Romans 8.13, clergy of the believer is enlisted in this process. So notwithstanding the definitive death to sin, while you be doing Colossians 2.23, the believer is not yet so delivered from sin in its lust and defilement, but that he needs to be actively engaged in death and sin. And to emphasize again, as the language used in definitive sanctification, I say as the language used in definitive sanctification, is that of passivity, so the language that is used now is that of activity on the part of the believer himself.

Now another passage. Having, therefore, he is promised, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filth of flesh, and, of course, means that both his spirit and his body, his flesh, must be subjected to this cleansing process. The assumption is, of course, that there is defilement of flesh and spirit, and that we ourselves are to be actively engaged in this cleansing process from all filth.

Now it is worthwhile the moment on what would be the implications of this. It is concerned with sin and defilement, still nearing in a healing, and, of course, it contemplates the removal of that defilement, the removal of it. And the removal of it cannot be more accurately expressed than by the word eradication.

Eradication. Eradication would be the only aim, the only end, compatible with the destination of the believer, namely conformity to Jesus. For he is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from the good one who approaches to him.

We find thus in 1 John, where John says, as we found, everyone who has this purifies, he is pure. And the pattern in this case, not specifically quite. For it is of the Father, John is speaking when he says, not yet hath it been made manifest what ye shall be, but we know that when it shall be manifested, we shall be like him.

We know that if it shall be for God the Father, the demand arises from the great goal or aim toward like God the Father. After the pattern of what Jesus himself said, ye shall be. In other words, for eradication, and therefore for the mortification which contributes to it, and here, in the very nature of the beliefs which the believer possesses, and the goal to which that, that, you know, the order is formed, in that pattern, says not only, all in, all in, all in, perhaps the most, this particular, is not used by the, is not used by the, Romans 12, India 3, 18, the verb, metamorpho, metamorphous, metamorpho, it is the English word, metamorphous, the substantive, of course, metamorphosis, consideration of the Greek.

In Romans 12, 2, part 8, ye are conformed, where it be not conformed, this world, but be transformed, transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the will of God, and the other passage, 2 Corinthians 3, 18, we, all with unveiled faith, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, be transformed, have been transformed, into the same image, from glory to glory, where ye remember to be transfigured, also the idea of being transfigured. Thus the goal of the whole redemptive process, conformity, to the image of Christ, as the firstborn among many brethren, Romans 8, 29, conform to the image of Christ as the firstborn among many brethren, in all time, in the whole of Scripture, defines for us, more significantly, the method of progressive sanctification, the method of progressive sanctification, than 2 Corinthians 3, 18. We all with unveiled faith, as we remember, that the treasure which is there, which is known within, determines the precise meaning of that, 2 Corinthians 3, 18, that cathartic omni, beholding, I'll deal with the two alternative interpretations in a moment, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed, into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord of the Spirit, and the Lord of the Spirit, and the Spirit of the Lord.

So what is the thought, really, that we behold the glory of the Lord Christ, or that we reflect His glory as in a mirror, both thoughts are implied. Difference of opinion, with respect to the import of that, of that particular third cathartic omni, but in either case, whether it is beholding or reflecting, both ideas are involved. For if we reflect, the glory of Christ, it is because we behold it, we reflect it, after the pattern of John, in John 1, 14, we beheld His glory, glorious of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And of course, in beholding, are being transformed more and more into His likeness. And if we behold His glory, we cannot but reflect, reproduce it, within the realm of our own creature. The idea is this, that the eyes of heart and mind become so affixed, I say they become so affixed, upon Him, that the impulsion of the Father's glory and the transcript of His being, that we more and more take on the character of His image, from one degree of similitude to another, from glory to glory, until finally, believers are completely transfigured, completely transfigured, and they leave no truth, fleeting fashions of this present evil age.

Now of course, that we become like that in which our interests and ambitions are absorbed, become like that. Now that law of our psychology is not suspended in this state. It's really a law of our being, according to the constitution, the psychological constitution that is.

But, this natural factor is not the secret of this transformation of which Paul speaks. It is from the Spirit of the Lord that this transformation proceeds from top to heel to bottom. Top to heel to bottom.

I don't suppose anyone can finally determine whether it is to be taken in the order in which it occurs, in one of two ways, from the Lord of the Spirit, or from the Lord of the Spirit, where Pneumatos would be in that position, to heel, or whether you take it in the opposite order, from the Spirit of the Lord, or from the Lord of the Spirit, and then the Spirit is identified with the Lord, from the Lord of the Spirit, when, in that case, Christ would be represented as exercising Lordship over the activities of the Holy Spirit within the realm of sacred process, or you take it the other way, which is the more traditional form, in the Spirit of the Lord. But whatever way you render it, the allusion to the Holy Spirit, the allusion to the Holy Spirit, cannot be eliminated, because Pneumatos, here in verse 18, parts back to verses 6 and 8, in the same chapter, 6 and 8, where the quickening power and the effective ministry of the Holy Spirit mark the preeminence of the new covenant as distinct from the old. If Paul here means the Lord of the Spirit, and there referring directly to the Lord Christ, he is even more frighteningly reflecting on the way in which the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit works in the interest of glorifying Christ and of bringing to His health this sanctifying process.

For in that, on that rendering even as well as the other renderings, the Spirit of the Lord, we are reminded of Jesus' own words, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all that truth, but He will not speak for Himself, but for everything He hears, those He will speak. He will glorify Me, because He will take of Mine and show it to you. John 16, verses 13 and 14.

So you see here, perhaps in a way, Paul is more helpful than anyone, than anyone perhaps in the process of confirmation of the image of Christ. The progressiveness of sanctification, of course, is also set forth in other ways, sanctification set forth in other ways. For example, Paul in Philippians 1, 9, Philippians 1, 9, represents it as love abounding more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.

Abounding more and more in knowledge and in all discernment. No discernment, but it is love that grows, that abounds more and more in knowledge. Or let us think of Peter, 1 Peter 2, 2. He speaks of this as growing by the sincere milk of the Word unto salvation.

Unto salvation. Growing healthy. Unto salvation.

Of course, salvation is there used in the eschatological sense, not in the sense of eschatological consummation. As newborn baby, by the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby unto salvation. That is the proper text.

That he may grow thereby unto salvation. The eschatological salvation used in that very theme in 1 Peter 1, 5. Again, Peter, in 2 Peter 3, 8. It is processed as growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It isn't there simply growing grace and in the knowledge, which scholars say, both in conjunction with the genesis, but grace and knowledge. There again you see coordination, which you find in Philippians 1, 9. I think that we might turn to one passage and carry on that a little longer than on any other one passage in this connection. And that is Ephesians 4, 12-16.

But here again, progressive edification, as we may call it. Progressive edification. Ephesians 4, 12-16.

And if you know your... If those of you who know Greek, some of you may be juniors and not very far advanced in Greek yet, but some of you know your Greek, if you turn to your appointment looking at this, first of all, just before the bell rings, Ephesians 4, 12. Well, you remember in the preceding verse, Paul says, and he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. Then he goes on at verse 12.

Unto the perfecting of the saints. That is, unto the fitting out of the saints. Fitting out perfectly for a certain end or purpose.

Unto the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. Unto the edification of the body of Christ. Unto the building up.

The edification of the body of Christ. Until we all come. That is, until we all arrive.

Until we all come. Unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Unto a perfect man.

Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In order that no longer we may be bathed tossed about and tagged along with every wind of teaching. In the traitory of man.

In the craftiness. Unto deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth of the human tongue.

Truthing it, if you will give that word, verbal form of truth. Speaking the truth in marvellous service. But speaking the truth in love.

We may grow unto Him in all things who is the head. Christ, namely Christ. From whom the whole body jointed together and knit together to every joint of the supply according to the working in the measure of each one part makes the increase in the body.

Unto the edification of itself in love. Now, for you to be following this extraordinary combination of thoughts the Apostle Paul has brought into that one passage. And you can see, you could have heard very readily the repeated emphasis that falls upon progression.

Progression, that's the particular aspect of it in which we are interested now. And, of course, that to which the progression is directed and the means by which the progression takes place. But in any case, you see, in reference to our apology you can see the goal ahead towards which there is movement till we all come to the unity of the faith and to a perfect man and to the measure of the status of the fullness of Christ.

And we'll be dealing with that at the beginning of next hour. That will be all for today.

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