

# The Papal and Hierarchial System - Part 8

by Joseph John Gurney

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and the distinction between faith and good works.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:4, Luke 14:27, John 3:16, Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Colossians 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 2:1

**Topics:** "Justification By Faith", "Holy Spirit Sanctification"

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## Description

Joseph John Gurney preaches about the contrast between the true Christian doctrine of justification and sanctification and the erroneous practices of the papal and hierarchical system. He emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, highlighting that righteousness is imputed to believers through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Gurney warns against the dangers of relying on external rituals, relics, and self-imposed mortifications for salvation, stressing the need for a genuine surrender to Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

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## Transcript

### ON JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

A VERY slight knowledge of the papal and hierarchical system, may suffice to convince every honest inquirer, that under its darkening and deadening influence, the grounds of the Christian's hope of salvation have been fearfully obscured, and the hope itself, to a very great extent, placed in jeopardy. The greatest of all evils is sin; and Christianity teaches us that all men are under condemnation, because all have sinned. The awful penalty consequent on that condemnation, is the death of the soul, or in other words, its eternal separation from God, in a state of unutterable woe.

How, then, in the first place, are we to experience deliverance from this weight of condemnation; p221 how are we to make our escape from this dreaded penalty? Under the dismal effects of moral and doctrinal apostacy, the professing church answers, By plenary indulgences from the pope; by penance; by priestly absolution; by the extraordinary mortifications of the flesh; by fastings frequent and severe; by voluntary torture; by the repetition of prayers without number; by the hardships of monasticism and hermitage; by the magical influence of relics, and pictures, and images; by the intercession of Mary and the saints; by the sacrifice of the mass; by the faithful observance of all kinds of ceremonies; and finally, by purgatory that last resource for the cleansing away of those stains of sin, in the Christian, which the other means now alluded to have left untouched.

In what measure and in what proportion these various modes of reconciliation with God are depended on by the votaries of Rome, I have no means of forming an adequate judgment; but it is evident, that they are severally objects of faith, on which poor deluded souls are taught to rely for the blotting out of their sins, and for securing their p222 escape from the pains of eternal death. There is a strong tendency in the heart of man to rest on these delusions, instead of coming fully and unreservedly to Jesus Christ and him crucified; for Christ crucified continues to be "to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness."

It is a fact, amply proved by experience, that visible and tangible representations of the crucified Saviour, and ceremonies in worship, which are intended to renew his sacrifice for sin with all other departures from simplicity in religion are so far from truly leading the soul to Christ as the only ground of the sinner's hope, that they often operate as diversions from the truth, and let in a vast variety of ways of salvation, as they are falsely supposed to be, instead of the Lord Jesus, who is himself, the way, the truth, and the life.

Well may this strange medley of satisfactions for sin, be described as a quicksand, in which many currents meet, and hollow out a pit beneath the glowing surface, into which the children of superstition are prone to fall, never more to rise unless some peculiar miracle of grace be wrought in their favour. True, indeed, it is, that the Romish church professes p223 a firm faith in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the doctrine of his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross; and that many pious adherents of that church availingly believe in Christ as their Saviour, and seek for the forgiveness of sin through his atoning blood.

Yet there can be no doubt, as I conceive, that the superstitious notions and practices to which we have now alluded -- these strange paths and by-ways to heaven -- are fraught with peculiar peril to the soul. They may often be the means of preventing an entrance through the door into the sheepfold; and therefore properly belong to the system and reign of antichrist, the false prophet, or the second beast who has the visage of a lamb, and the voice of a dragon. It is greatly to be feared that there is a recurrence in the present day, even among churches called protestant, to many of these unauthorized and dangerous inventions.

More than a few of the professors of scriptural religion have lapsed into a disregard and concealment of those cardinal truths which once occupied their chief attention, and seem to have lost the strength and clearness p224 of their vision respecting the way the only way of SALVATION. In the mean time the truth of God remains unchanged, and the very agitation and sifting of things, which is now abroad among professing Christians, will doubtless be the means of confirming thousands in their adherence to Christ.

Well may we exclaim with the poet, "Oh, how unlike the cumbrous works of man, Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan! No meretricious graces to beguile, No clustering ornaments to clog the pile; From ostentation as from weakness free, It stands like the cerulean arch we see, Majestic in its own simplicity. Inscribed above the portals from afar, Conspicuous as the brightness of a star, Legible only by the light they give, Stand the soul-quickenings words, believe and live." - COWPER.

Nothing can be more simple and decisive than the doctrine of our Lord himself, on the condition or means of salvation: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" John iii. 16. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting p225 life:" vi. 47. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die:" xi. 25, 26.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? said the jailer at Philippi to Paul and Silas; "and they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house:" Acts xvi. 31. From these, and many similar declarations, it is evident that in order to obtain salvation even deliverance from the wrath to come we are required to believe on Jesus, the Saviour of the world; and that all men, of every name, age, or country, who truly believe on him, will assuredly be saved.

In these simple yet comprehensive declarations, nothing is said of penance, and masses, and fastings; nothing of any ceremonial observance; nothing of absolution, indulgence, or satisfaction for sin, doled out by the power or pity of man. Faith in the Saviour, and this alone, is the thing which God demands of us in order to the forgiveness of our sins, and the salvation of our immortal souls. Yet the devils believe and tremble. It is not a mere knowledge of the truth, p226 with the conviction of the understanding, which will serve this mighty purpose.

It is the deep affiance of the soul; it is the leaning of the loving heart on Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost a disposition which can never fail to be accompanied by repentance towards God, and the unreserved surrender of the whole man to his righteous will and service. This, however, is a subject which requires to be somewhat more developed. We have "redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." Hence it follows, that the faith in him, whereby, under the gospel, we obtain that forgiveness, has a marked and peculiar respect to his bloodshedding on the cross.

Thus we find, that when presenting himself to his hearers, as the object of saving faith, our Lord repeatedly directed their attention to this central point. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of man be lifted up, (that is, on the cross, comp. John xii. 33) that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life:" John iii. 14, L3. And again: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, (whoso livingly believeth in me as the atonement p227 for sin) hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day:" vi. 54.

The pardon of sin through faith in Christ crucified, is often described by Paul as justification. All mankind are sinners, guilty in the sight of a holy and righteous God. Neither the tears of repentance, nor the Christian virtues afterwards implanted by divine grace, can possibly efface those stains of guilt. Never can these be washed away, except in the fountain set open in Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness, even the fountain of the blood of the Lamb; and this blessed purpose is effected through the instrumentality of faith.

Therefore "we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law." This subject is admirably set forth by the apostle in various passages. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren," said he, to the Jews of Antioch, "that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified of all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses:" Acts xiii. 38, 39. To the Galatians, he says: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, p228 but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Soon afterwards he adds, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:" Gal. ii. 16; iii. 13. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And again: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him:" Rom. v. 1, 8, 9.

It is chiefly, however, in the preceding chapters of this epistle, that the apostle insists on the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith, traces it to its root, and unfolds the principles on which it rests. In the first place, he enters on an awful description of the corruption and wickedness of the heathen nations, who sinned against the law of a righteous God, revealed in the heart. He next p229 shows that the Jews, on whom was bestowed the written law, were no better; for while they made a profession of godliness, they were deeply alienated from God by their sins.

Thus he proves that all mankind, in the fall, and in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, are prone to iniquity, sinners in point of fact, and guilty in the sight of a holy and omniscient Creator. From this guilt, and from the condemnation and punishment which are its inevitable consequence, no human power or virtue, no works of the law, either ceremonial or moral, can possibly deliver us. It stands to reason that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, because we have broken the law, and it is the law that condemns us.

The more clearly it is revealed to us, the more marked and conspicuous, the more aggravated also, is our guilt. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin:" Rom. iii. 20. But God, who is rich in mercy, and whose love is an unfathomable deep, for our sakes spared not his own Son, but sent him into the world to die for sinners, that whosoever believeth in him, and in the blood of his atonement, might receive the forgiveness p230 of sin, and live for ever.

This is a simple sketch of the apostle's views, as unfolded in this epistle. "All have sinned," says he, "and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS."

The divine attributes of justice and mercy, perfect and absolute, and liable to no defalcation, meet, unite, and blend in the doctrine of the atonement. The penalty of death has been exacted; and One of infinite dignity, virtue, and power, in his own voluntary love, as well as in obedience to the will of the Father, has undergone that penalty. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Thus the utmost claims of the p231 law of God -- that unchangeable expression of his perfect righteousness -- are fully satisfied. "The righteousness of God," is declared and established in his own glorious plan "for the remission of sins." And the Judge of all flesh is demonstrated to be just, while he justifies "him which believeth in Jesus." After this explicit enunciation of that cardinal doctrine of Christianity, justification by faith, the apostle proceeds to illustrate the subject by the example of Abraham, and the experience of David.

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN:" Rom. iv. 3-8. p232 Two points of great interest and importance here claim our attention. We find in the first place, that Abraham and David are adduced as examples of that faith, by which sinners are justified in the sight of God; or in other words, receive the forgiveness of their transgressions, and are dealt with as if they had never sinned. Now although these faithful men were far from being destitute of some knowledge of their Redeemer, it cannot be supposed that they enjoyed that clearness of view respecting his coming in the flesh, and his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross, which is the privilege of true Christians under the gospel dispensation.

Yet they believed in Christ according to the measure of the light bestowed upon them; and their faith was counted unto them for righteousness. The same observation unquestionably applies to all the saints of the Old Testament. Nor can it be reasonably doubted, that even among nations which have no direct knowledge of revealed religion, there have been many persons in different ages of the world, who have believed in God, according to the measure of the light of the Holy Spirit immediately p233 bestowed upon them, as a guide and rectifier to their consciences.

These also, as we may fully believe, have been justified by faith, through the mediation and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ; for "in every nation, he that feareth (God) and worketh righteousness is accepted of him;" Acts x. 35. "For not the hearers of the law," says the apostle to the Romans, "are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified; for when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another:" Rom. ii. 13 15.

The mercies of God and the operation of his grace, are, as I venture to believe, much more comprehensive than many persons suppose. Yet none can be saved but "by grace, through faith;" and that not of themselves "it is the gift of God." In the mean time, let all who enjoy the unutterable privilege of the noonday light of the gospel of Christ, never fail to remember, that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required" a p234 faith corresponding to their knowledge, a conduct worthy of their faith.

The second point alluded to, is embraced in the words just quoted, "the doers of the law shall be justified." I conceive that this sentiment fully applies to those persons whom the apostle elsewhere describes, as being "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The deeds of the law have no part whatsoever in procuring the pardon of their sins; for they have broken the law, and the law condemns them to death. But now, under grace, they are become doers of the law; nor could they have been justified by faith, had not their faith been so vital and divine in its nature, as to be necessarily productive of this practical result.

Such a view of the subject will explain the apparent difficulty of the doctrine of James, as compared with that of Paul. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was p235 not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only:" James ii. 17-24. James, in the character of a consistent and fruitful believer, here addresses some imaginary

person who professes faith in Christianity, without practising its precepts.

He challenges him to display his spurious article to the best advantage, and offers to bring his own belief to the test of the works which it produces. Powerfully does he illustrate his doctrine by comparing faith without works, to the body without the Spirit; and to the belief of devils who know God and hate him. On the other hand, he justly dwells on the example of Abraham, who proved the vitality of his faith, by a memorable and most difficult act of obedience. Thus is he, brought to his general conclusion, that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith ONLY." p236 On this subject we are competent to say, that as sinners we are justified (i. e. we receive the pardon of our sins) by faith in Christ without the deeds of the law; and that as believers, we are justified by good works; for these alone afford a sufficient evidence that our faith is vital, divine, and saving.

This distinction is, I trust, sound and clear. But if there be any doubt of its critical exactness as an explanation of the apostle's use of the word "justified," we may rest on the obvious tendency and intent of the whole passage; namely, that faith cannot be the means of our acceptance with God, unless it be of such a nature as to produce obedience in the believer. For it remains to be an unquestionable truth, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The plain fact is, that neither faith nor obedience, however pure they may be in their character, and however well pleasing to God, are in their own nature justifying; but faith -- even that vital faith which works by love, and produces the fruits of righteousness is the appointed instrument, in the order of grace, whereby we lay hold on the mercies of God in Christ Jesus that blessed Mediator who truly and properly justifies the sinner. p237 Most assuredly there is nothing in the doctrine of the apostle James, which supports the opinion of the Romish church, that good works are meritorious in the sight of God, and actually give a title to the reward of everlasting felicity.

It appears to be an opinion prevailing among the advocates of the papal system, that almsgiving, and other acts of Christian piety and mercy, deserve an eternity of bliss as their just and equal reward. If, however, it is allowed that many good persons -- faithful sons and daughters of the church are yet imperfect, the righteousness of Christ may take its share in making up the supposed deficiency in their deserts. In the Romish saints, however, there is imagined to be no such deficiency.

Never probably was there so anti-christian a notion propagated under the name of Christianity, as that which arose in the dark ages, respecting works of supererogation. It was then first openly declared, that the church was in possession, of an immense stock of merit, accumulated in her keeping from age to age, by such sufferings and labours of the saints, as exceeded the requirements of the law of God -- a stock which she has the power of dealing out, through her visible head the pope, p238 in such times and in such portions as she pleases, in order to secure the favoured recipients of the boon, from the punishment of their sins a new method truly of escaping from the wrath to come, and of obtaining an entrance into the kingdom of rest and purity!

It cannot for a moment be questioned, that beneficence, and the exercise of other virtues and graces, are sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ. As vice is abominable in his sight, so true virtue, in all its lovely forms, and under every variety of circumstance, can never fail to be well-pleasing to a perfectly pure and righteous being; and when the sinner is converted from the error of his ways, the angels reflect their Father's smile, and rejoice in his holy presence.

But while this admission is most freely to be made respecting that glorious Being, who is ever found on the side of righteousness, the Christian must distinctly deny that the best works of man even those which are

wrought under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost have any merit; in such a sense as justly to claim the reward of eternal life. Our sins indeed deserve death even the death of the soul; and p239 the death of the soul is their "wages." But eternal life "is the GIFT of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" a gift wholly unmerited and spontaneous; flowing forth, through its one appointed channel, to the fallen children of men, from the fathomless abyss of Jehovah's love.

We know that our first parents were created in the image of Jehovah, and after his likeness; a truth which probably had respect, first, to the intellectual mind; secondly, to a perfect moral nature; and thirdly, to the eternal continuance of life. There can be no doubt, that had they remained in their pristine state of innocence, an eternity of happy existence would have been the consequence. But this consequence would not have arisen in the way of wages gained by good works, or because of any inherent merits in their virtuous dispositions and conduct, but simply in the appointment of infinite and gratuitous love.

God is not profited or placed under obligation by the obedience of his own creatures, but obedience is his due; and the creature who renders that obedience, does but pay a debt already incurred. Well might the Temanite ask, "Can a man be profitable unto God, p240 as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous (in the sense of adding to that happiness which is already infinite)? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

Job xxii. 2, 3. "So likewise ye," said our Saviour to his disciples, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS: we have done that which was our duty to do:" Luke xvii. 10. But the fact, at once clear and awful, is that we are fallen creatures that we have lost the moral image of our Creator that we are by nature corrupt and prone to iniquity, and therefore children of wrath. The golden chain which connected our first parents with an eternity of happiness, provided for them in the wondrous love of God, is broken, destroyed, demolished.

Therefore our hopes are solely in Christ through whom our sins are forgiven, and we ourselves reconciled unto God. Repentance and amendment, although the work of grace, and approved of God, can never blot out the stain of our past sins. Present virtue, the fruit of that Spirit which is given to us in Christ, p241 can do no more than fulfil present obligation. In the meantime, where is the child of piety and faith, who has not yet "finished" his "course," in whom some lingering remnants may not be found of indwelling sin?

What can the best of men do, therefore, but cast themselves on the infinite resources of the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord? "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world:" 1 John ii. 1, 2. Let a Roman Catholic poet tell us the simple truth on this most important of subjects; and let all, whether Papists or Protestants, rally to that foundation of which he so emphatically speaks: But if there be a power too just and strong To wink at crimes, and bear unpunished wrong; Look humbly upward, see his will disclose The forfeit first, and then the fine impose; A mullet thy poverty could never pay, Had not eternal wisdom found the way, And with celestial wealth supplied thy store.

His justice makes the fine, his mercy quits the score. See God descending in thy human frame, The offended suffering in the offender's name. All thy misdeeds to him imputed see, And all his righteousness devolved on thee. - DRYDEN -- Religio Laici.

p242 To sum up the whole subject in a few sentences, it is plainly the doctrine of Scripture, that righteousness is imputed to the true believer. Thus Abraham is declared to be the father of all them that believe, even among the Gentile nations, "that righteousness might be imputed to them also:" Rom. iv. 11.

Again, the apostle says, respecting Abraham, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification:" iv. 23 25.

In the following chapter he declares, that "they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by one, Jesus Christ." Now what is this righteousness which is thus imputed, thus freely given, to the believer? If we are to take the Scriptures for our guide, we cannot fail to answer, It is the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the branch who was to be raised up unto David, the king who was to reign over Israel, whose name was to be called "Jehovah OUR righteousness:" Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

"Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I p243 righteousness and strength. In the LORD (that is in the divine Saviour) shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory:" Isa. xlv. 24, 25.[13] " Christ Jesus" is " made unto us of God, righteousness:" 1 Cor. i. 30. God " hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM:" 2 Cor. v. 21. Not only are we saved from the awful penalty of our sins by his propitiatory death and sacrifice; not only are we delivered, for his sake, on whom was the "chastisement of our peace," from the bitter pains of eternal death; but we are placed in possession of an indisputable title to the joys of a glorious immortality, in virtue of our union by faith with Him, whose righteousness is, in its own nature, perfect, absolute, ever-abounding, and infinitely meritorious in the sight of the Father.

That divine righteousness is imputed to the believer by faith. This is the clothing of wrought gold, even the purest gold of Ophir, in which the Bride, the Church, is invested: Psal. xlv. 13 the "robe of righteousness," wherein she greatly exults and p244 rejoices: Isa. lxi. 10 the best of all robes, in which the penitent and returning sinner is mantled by his Father's hand -- the garment of salvation, the wedding garment, without which we can never be accepted guests at the home of our Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting abode of rest and of glory.

"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 1,2. It is the highest praise of Christianity, and its main distinguishing characteristic, that it is a religion of holiness -- a religion which, by setting in action the most influential motives, leads, with a resistless power, to the abandonment of every sin and the practice of every virtue. The awful discovery which it makes to us of judgment to come? and of the perfect justice of God, imbues the true believer with a salutary yet awful fear of the Supreme Being.

This fear is ever found to be p245 "a fountain of life, preserving from the snares of death." The blessed prospect of eternal happiness animates our hope, and this hope quickens our footsteps in the race of righteousness. We run as those who have the glorious goal set before us; reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This hope, moreover, sustains our patience, and strengthens our fortitude; it is an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast.

Above all, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, so paternal, so tender, so infinitely great, produces love in our own bosoms; and the heavenly flame once kindled, is of such a nature, that it will burn with ever-increasing brightness to all eternity. Love induces, in the Christian believer, a holy decision of character, an unreserved sacrifice of self, a constancy of allegiance to the Shepherd of Israel, who bought us with his own blood. Yet as the mechanical forces (such as the wedge, the screw, and the lever) cannot



produce their effects unless they are applied with power, so fear, hope, and love, strong motives as they are, and capable of being most beneficially excited by the great truths of the gospel of Christ, will never p246 be made to move effectually, or move in the right direction, unless those truths are accompanied, in their application to the mind, by the Spirit of God.

This Spirit is itself the grand moving power the very spring of life, in the soul, and of all that is lovely, holy, and heavenly, in the conduct and conversation of the Christian. The word sanctification may be taken in two senses. Sometimes it signifies the first dedication of the soul, as a holy thing, to God, the author of our being. In this point of view, it must be regarded as simultaneous with justification, being the immediate result of that change of heart which is wrought in the Christian convert by the power of God.

The sinner who comes with a penitent and believing heart to Christ, deposits his sins -- that intolerable burden at the Saviour's feet: he receives the free pardon of them through the blood of Jesus, and without a moment's hesitation or delay, renounces them for ever. But where is the Christian, who truly knows himself, who will not confess that even after this signal change in his condition, he has a perpetual struggle to maintain between the flesh and the spirit that p247 although sin may no longer have dominion over him, it sometimes prevails, in word and deed, and especially in thought and imagination, over his better mind?

The lingering corruptions of his fallen nature require many baptisms under the waves of the "river of God," which is "full of water," before they can be entirely purged away, so that nothing may be left not even one particle of the polluting mire of this world to interrupt his entrance, through the pearl gates, into the new Jerusalem. It was to a company of Christian converts, in their character of truly regenerate persons, that Paul addressed the words, "The very God of peace sanctify you WHOLLY:" 1 Thess. v. 23.

"The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth MORE AND MORE unto the perfect day:" Prov. iv. 18. Sanctification, then, in its secondary sense, is that purifying work of the Holy Spirit, by which regenerate persons are gradually more and more weaned from the world -- more and more fitted for that glorious inheritance, into which nothing that is impure, nothing that worketh abomination, nothing that maketh or loveth a lie, can ever enter. I have heard it remarked by a wise and learned man, p248 well instructed in the school of Christ, that in order to enter on this inheritance, there must be both "a right and a rightness."

Our right of entrance -- the only title which is clear and indefeasible is in Christ, our advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins. But there must be a rightness also; even that state of purity, without which we can never be fitted for the society of saints and angels, and for the immediate presence of the immaculate Lamb. This rightness, or to adopt another and parallel view of the case, this ripeness, can be produced in the dispositions and character of a man, only by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit of God.

He who has begun a good work in us, must "perfect it to the end," or we shall never be presented faultless in Christ, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy. Sometimes, indeed, the work of regeneration, justification, and sanctification, are all effected within a very short period: for with God all things are possible. The example of the thief on the cross, who first railed on his Lord, and very soon afterwards was a true believer, and a new creature in Christ, with heaven immediately before him, is sufficient to preclude p249 despair, even in prolonged cases of sin and rebellion against God.

But let no man dare to depend on a death-bed repentance; for according to the ordinary dealings of divine wisdom and love, the work of sanctification and preparation for heaven is very gradual. It is a matter of spiritual education conducted by a divine hand; and often one of severe discipline. The cross must be endured by every warrior in the army of the Lamb; we must take it up in faith, hold it fast in patience, and uplift it with holy magnanimity as our standard in battle.

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me:" Gal. ii. 20. Again, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world:" vi. 14. It was the declaration of the apostle who wrote these things, when he confirmed the souls of the disciples in many places, that "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom;" Acts xiv. 22, a doctrine which agrees with the fact recorded in the Apocalypse, that the multitude around the throne p250 of God, who were clothed in white robes, and held in their hands the ensigns of victory, had come "out of great tribulation:" Rev. vii. 14.

"Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," said our blessed Lord to his disciples; and no one, as we may believe, has ever more largely experienced the truth of this saying than Paul himself. In the first place, he was crucified with Christ, when he died to the law, renounced his self-righteousness, sacrificed his reputation as a Jew and a Pharisee, and gave in his adherence to that once lowly and suffering, though now risen and reigning Saviour, whom he had before despised and persecuted -- when he counted all things loss, and did esteem them as dung and dross, that he might win Christ.

And, secondly, in consequence of this self-renunciation, and in connexion with his service in the gospel, he was himself exposed to mockery, hatred, and persecution; he underwent cruel scourgings, bonds, and imprisonments; he fought with wild beasts; hardships by sea and by land, and terrors of impending death, met him, as it were, at every turn; and, finally, he sealed his testimony to the truth, by willing submission to a p251 martyr's death. Add to all these things, his anxious care of the churches, his vast exertions, the "buffetings of Satan, his painful exercises of spirit, the deep conflicts of his soul.

Nothing can be more admirable than the triumph of a holy faith over all these trials: "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body:" 2 Cor. iv. 8-10. No one can reasonably doubt, that under the grace of the Holy Spirit, this course of severe discipline was, to the apostle, a most effective means of sanctification, and of preparation for a state of perfect purity and unbounded joy.

Thus, when death approached, he could speak in triumphant language; "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day:" 2 Tim. iv. 68. p252 Undoubtedly the case of the apostle Paul was in various respects peculiar, and even singular. But our Saviour's declaration is absolutely universal: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple:" Luke xiv. 27.

How, then, is the cross laid on Christians in general? In the first place, it remains to be a certain truth that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." The world lying in wickedness is still opposed to vital and decided Christianity; so that, even in the present day, when a high profession of

religion is more or less fashionable, they who yield themselves, without reserve, to those humbling and searching principles which our Lord and his apostles promulgated, will find much to endure of contempt and opposition.

Even if the persons themselves are respected, their principles are often despised and ridiculed. But independently of this fact, the cross of affliction, in this state of probation, is laid on the followers of Christ, as well as on the rest of mankind. So far are they from being exempt from the general law "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards" that we often find the most p253 devoted servants of God disciplined, in an extraordinary degree, in the school of adversity.

Nor does the sincere Christian fail to perceive that his trials of faith and patience are, for the most part, well adapted to his peculiar dispositions or weaknesses obviously intended as correctives suitable to his need. Thus does he realize the truth of the declaration, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" and that although "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby:" Heb. xii. 6-11.

A wise writer has declared that "gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity:" Eccus. ii. 5. "Behold," saith the Lord to Israel, "I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction: Isa. xlviii. 10. Sustained by the uplifting arm of omnipotence, gifted with patient resignation, and comforted by the remembrance of sympathies which are in Christ, the true hearted follower of the Lamb is sometimes enabled to rejoice in his tribulations; his patience works experience of the Lord's tender lovingkindness, and this experience confirms and animates p254 his hope.

Thus is he disciplined and educated for heaven, and taught to look peacefully forward to the quickly coming day of final deliverance and joy. But far above all, in order to our progress in sanctification, there is a cross to be known, and felt, and patiently borne within. In the strivings of grace against nature; in the secret monitions of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in us by his Spirit, and directed with undeviating certainty against all things which are defiled in his sight; and in a thorough surrender of the soul to these monitions there is a cross to be endured, which mortifies our carnal affections and lusts, brings us into more and more of conformity to the death of Christ, and so prepares us to rise with him, into light, and life, and heavenly mindedness.

Thus is "our life hid with Christ in God;" and "when Christ who is our life shall appear," we also "shall appear with him in glory:" Col. iii. 3, 4. While, however, a submission to the cross of Christ is the necessary preparation for our sitting together in "heavenly places" in him, even during the course of our mortal pilgrimage, it is far indeed from unfitting us for our citizenship in the p255 world, and for the duties which devolve on us, as Christians and as men. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," said our holy Redeemer, " but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil:" John xvii. 15.

Yes, truly; that law of the Lord which is perfect, converting the soul written as it is in the page of Scripture, and engraven by a master hand of indubitable authority on the regenerate mind is an all-pervading light. It follows the Christian with counsel and instruction by night and by day, in public and in private, in sickness and in health -- in the pursuits of agriculture, commerce, literature, and science; in the labours of philanthropy, in the services of religion, in the senate, in the court, on the throne, in the cottage, in the solitude of the closet, in the fireside circle, in the vast assembly.

It leads to the performance of every relative duty in the fear and love of God. In all places, and on all occasions, it bears testimony to the absolute necessity of abstinence from evil. Powerfully does it search

our words and actions, as well as our imaginations, motives, and affections. Unfailingly does it proclaim the language, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." "TOUCH NOT THE UNCLEAN p256 THING, and I will receive you; and will be a Father to you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty:" 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

The Holy Scriptures promulgate, in a lively and explicit manner, the general principles of the divine law, and abound in precepts respecting our relative duties. Yet in reducing these principles and precepts to daily and hourly action in applying them to the endless diversity of occasion and circumstance, to which we are exposed in life we stand in need of the immediate and perceptible guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is a light which, as I believe, shines in a measure, in the consciences of all men; though often very faintly, like a small candle in a dark and extensive cavern "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

But to the true Christian it is a bright and steady lamp which will never fail him; a swift witness against all that is evil in the sight of God; a monitor within, which cannot be silenced; a guide to righteousness, which never deceives. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and p257 is truth, and no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him:" 1 John ii. 27.

Nor is it to be forgotten, that in connexion with a diversity of spiritual gifts, there is an equal diversity of individual duty, to be performed by the living members of the church of Christ. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal -- one is led into one duty, and another into another. In all such matters, the obedience of faith in the church, and its individual members, ought to adapt itself to the scope and variety of divine administration; and the day's work, if we would witness the needful progress in sanctification, must keep pace with the day.

Thus the pure leaven of truth spreads more and more in the believing mind, and gradually pervades the whole inner man softening, sweetening, and cleansing the immortal spirit until it is fully prepared to burst away from the shackles of mortality, and to enter on its new habitation of perfect purity and bliss. Thus also, through individual faithfulness, that leaven shall diffuse itself through the church of Christ, struggling and militant as she is on earth, until the saying is fulfilled, "The king's p258 daughter is ALL GLORIOUS WITHIN" fit for her final coalescence with the "general assembly" of the "spirits of the just made perfect."

I make no question, that the view which has now been taken of sanctification is, in substance, embraced by many a pious Roman Catholic, as well as Protestant. But how widely does it differ from those notions respecting the cross of Christ, which during a long night of ignorance and superstition, were palmed on the world, under the papal and hierarchical system notions which are still maintained and acted on to a vast and terrible extent! In the first place, wooden or silver images of the cross (such is the strength of our natural tendency to idolatry) are, in thousands and tens of thousands of instances, the worthless substitutes for the all-important reality; both in its doctrinal character, and in its practical operation on the heart.

They are folded to many a trembling bosom, and upheld before many a bended knee; embraced, trusted in, and worshipped, with a multitude of other worthless relics and figures; as if there was any life for the soul, any efficacy for the renovation of the heart, any virtue for the reformation of character, in the works p259 of men's hands, which speak not, hear not, smell not, taste not or in the dead materials with which nature builds! Yet not less dead for any spiritual or saving purpose, are the forced celibacy of the clergy,

the splenetic solitude of hermits, the seclusion and imprisonment of myriads of unmarried females, the shorn heads, rough garments, and spare living of friars, the formal and often-repeated fastings, the long and painful vigils, the iron beds, the hair shirts, the unpaired nails, the voluntary filth and wretchedness, the long and wearisome pilgrimages, the self-imposed stripes which Rome has invented for the mortification or torture of her votaries, in order to their improvement and perfection in holiness.

"Forbidding to marry" was one of the earliest tokens of a spirit, which under the guise of a high religious profession, was utterly opposed to vital and saving Christianity: 1 Tim. iv. 3. It must be considered, on scriptural grounds, one of the peculiar characteristics of Antichrist; and certainly there is no feature which has more conspicuously marked the professing church in her apostacy, than this p260 unrighteous interference with the laws of God and nature. The declaration of Jehovah, immediately before the creation of woman, that "it is not good for man to be alone," (Gen. ii. 18.) corresponds with that sacred seal of sanction, which our Lord, in his discourses, impressed on the matrimonial covenant (Matt. xix. 4-6), and with the apostolic doctrine that "marriage is honourable IN ALL:" (Heb. xiii. 4.)

But as the church became more and more overshadowed with darkness (even in very ancient times) the notion that celibacy formed an essential part of sanctification, made gradual progress, until it took deep root in the bosom of popery. Thus it became a primary ecclesiastical law, that none of those who minister of holy things, might have any part in this rich blessing, which God has bestowed, in his bounty, on the whole human race. Vast are the multitudes of men, in the thrift and vigour of life, who have been devoted by this stern decree of the mother of spiritual fornication, to a condition as much opposed to their moral welfare, as to their temporal comfort; and tens of thousands of young females have been doomed, under the same p261 dark rule, to perpetual celibacy, and incarceration.

What tongue can tell the secret misery which has been endured by many an unhappy victim of rash vows, under this iron yoke of despotism? What pen can adequately depict the moral and spiritual darkness which (under the profession of superior sanctity) has brooded, from age to age, over the monasteries and nunneries of perverted and degraded Christendom? There can be no question, that in numerous instances, the several practices now mentioned have been a mere cover for iniquity; that under these disfigured and unsightly appearances, pride, malice, and evil concupiscence have very often lurked, and have revelled abundantly in their day.

But even when adopted and adhered to, in all sincerity, they are at variance with the laws of nature, subversive of the social harmonies of society, destructive of that usefulness which every man owes to the fellows of his race, injurious to the happiness of the church, and utterly opposed to the diffusive stream of divine liberality and benevolence. Persuaded as I am that this is the native and uniform tendency of self-imposed crosses and mortifications, p262 far be it from me to deal superciliously with any tender conscience.

We are not to forget that a variety of experience in this respect, in matters naturally indifferent, is recognized in Scripture; and the great principle is plainly declared, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." In the mean time, let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; and let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not. Rather than offend a weak brother, Paul was ready to abstain from meat all his life long; and circumstances sometimes arise, when abstinence even from the moderate use of lawful things, may be required of us, on the grand principle of Christian love, for the benefit of those around us, and for the furtherance of the ever-blessed cause of truth and righteousness.

Nevertheless, there is nothing harsh, or unseemly in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its genuine practical application. His yoke is easy and his burden light. Vital religion to the soul and character of a man, is what the soul itself is to his body. It pervades the whole man; it animates and enlivens every part of his mental constitution, every part of his character and conduct. There is no straining, no awkwardness, no unhealthiness p263 in its operation. All its effects are in unison with the true order of nature; all are embued with the influences of divine love; all tend to the welfare and comfort of our species, and (though it may be through much of suffering and conflict) to the highest enjoyment for ourselves, of which man is capable.

The more unreservedly we obey the will of God, as it is declared in Scripture, and manifested by his own Spirit, in the secret of the heart, the more tolerable will be our pains, the more exquisite our pleasures, the larger the amount of our happiness even here. "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee in the way that thou shouldest go -- that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments -- Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

[13] Footnote:

The immediate context of this passage is twice quoted by the apostle Paul, as applying to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/joseph-john-gurney-/the-papal-and-hierarchial-system-part-8/>

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