

On Gospel Sanctification.

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life worthy of the Gospel, seeking the Holy Spirit, and striving for sanctification and holiness.

Scripture: Romans 3:27, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:14, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Ephesians 2:20, Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 2:14, Philippians 4:8

Topics: "Gospel Sanctification", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the foundation of the Gospel being Jesus Christ, emphasizing the heavenly graces it offers and the need for humility, faith, and obedience. He highlights the exclusivity of human merit in Paul's theology, focusing on the sanctifying nature of true faith in Christ. Reade urges believers to live lives worthy of their calling, emphasizing the importance of holiness, unity, and love. He cautions against abusing the grace of the Gospel and encourages believers to resist sin and walk in the sanctifying power of faith in Christ.

Transcript

Like a wise master-builder Paul laid the true foundation- Jesus Christ; and built thereon a sacred edifice of heavenly graces, more valuable than gold and silver and precious stones. Those who study the nature of the Gospel, and live under its power, both know, and can enter into its blessed design. All its doctrines, precepts, and promises, are calculated to abase the pride of man, to exalt the glory of Christ, to reveal the malignity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of the world, the bliss of heaven; to show the sinner his utter helplessness, and to reveal to him an all-sufficient Savior- for proud man must be humbled, the idol self must be dethroned.

Hence; we find that human merit is altogether excluded from the system of Paul's theology. Being illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he preached the truth without any mixture of error. There are no disproportions, no disfiguring features in his portraiture of Eternal Truth. Perfection in all its parts bespeaks its Divine original. With uncompromising firmness he declares- that faith is the gift of God; that we are justified by faith; that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith; that we walk by faith; that we are the children of God by faith.

It was therefore to the faithful in Christ Jesus, that the Apostle wrote with such affectionate entreaty, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond

of peace. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

How powerfully does he inculcate the duty of universal holiness, "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you."

With such exhortations to holy obedience, how strange that any reflecting mind should, for a moment, charge the doctrines of grace with having a licentious tendency. Yet, there were people, as we have already noticed, who were base enough to abuse the grace of the Gospel. The champion for the Truth hesitated not to call them, "the enemies of Christ, whose end is destruction." So carefully did he guard believers against those evils of our nature, which, when brought into contact with the Gospel, destroy its sufficiency by self-righteousness; its purity by antinomianism.

With peculiar emphasis, almost bordering on indignation, he asks these abusers of the Gospel; "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And then, after showing the sanctifying nature of true faith in Christ, he gives the believer this blessed assurance; "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law but under grace."

In all periods of the Church, Satan has sown his tares among the wheat. This state of the visible Church, is declared by our divine Savior, in various parables of exquisite beauty. The good and bad fishes -the wise and foolish virgins- the fruitful and barren branches- the guests with, and the one without, a wedding garment; are all designed to illustrate this truth- that as they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, so neither are they all true Christians, who profess to be members of Christ. Paul, with his usual discrimination of character, has given us the distinctive features of these two classes; the one holding the Truth in unrighteousness; the other, holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure conscience.

O! that we could enter, by sweet experience, into the Apostle's charge to the Christians at Philippi- "In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them. Hold tightly to the word of life, so that when Christ returns, I will be proud that I did not lose the race and that my work was not useless. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel."

How meek and gentle, how harmless and unoffending were these early followers of the lowly Jesus; and yet, how bold and fearless in their confessions of Christ, before an ungodly world. They shrunk indeed from sin, but not from suffering for the Gospel's sake. O that we could resemble these primitive believers who were the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth. Their spirituality of mind, their joy through believing, their renunciation of self and worldly greatness, formed those lovely features of the new creature, which the Apostle so admirably described when drawing his own character to the Philippian converts- "For we who worship God in the Spirit are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in human effort. Instead, we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us." O that the Spirit

may be poured out upon all our churches; then the world would once more see the beauty of Christianity in the holy lives of its professors.

These extracts, though forming a small part of those exhortations to holiness, and cautions against sin, with which his Epistles abounded, show the infinite value of the Book of God- that storehouse of heavenly wisdom. Following its holy light, through the guidance of the Spirit, the believer is led into all truth, comforted under trials, guarded against temptations, directed to the right performance of relative duties, and taught how he might to walk and please God.

"The blessing of heaven resting upon the devout study of the Bible, often induces those long dead in trespasses and sins to turn from the errors of their ways, and save their souls. The Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots, because the Agent of the transformation is Almighty; and they may also do good, who are accustomed to do evil. If we expect a moral and religious population, we must lay the foundation deep in an early acquaintance with the sanction of the Law, and the merits of the Gospel. We must endeavor to impress the lessons of Divine Truth upon the minds of the young, while their attention is pliant and their affections warm; while they are yet, as much as possible unspotted from the world, and before contact with sinful seductions shall have diffused its chilling influence over their hearts. If the duty be important, it should be early commenced; if the undertaking be difficult, it should be entered upon without delay. If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, then how can we contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein we trusted they wearied us, then how shall we do in the swelling of Jordan?"

We cannot sufficiently value the Records of Eternal Truth. The more we love the Bible, the more will its holy influence be visible in our lives.

The true believer in Jesus, when living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clothed with humility; the love of God is shed abroad in his heart; the peace of God rules within him; he is adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory; he abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit; and receives the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul. Such will be our character, and such our privileges, if like him we feel the power of grace in our hearts.

If our affections are set on things above, we also shall be safe, whatever storms may agitate the world; and if our life be hid with Christ in God, we shall have a sure refuge against the rage of Satan, and the fear of death. While the worldling's treasure is fading as the tints of evening, our portion will be glorious as the days of heaven; for God will be our everlasting light, and the Lamb our glory. How loosely then should we sit to all things here below. Oh that we could practically learn to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

May every heart be impressed with the Apostle's appeal to the church of Corinth, "Brethren, the time is short. It remains, that both those who have wives, be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they wept not; and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those who buy, as though they possessed not; and those who use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passes away."

The more we contemplate the holiness of God, and the nature of our redemption by Jesus Christ, the more we must be convinced, that sanctification is the beauty and the health of the soul. The holy Christian is the happy Christian. He may, and must have troubles as he journeys to his heavenly rest; but so long as Jesus is his guide and guardian, darkness may reign without, but all shall be peace and light within.

What lies nearest to our hearts? All men propose some object to themselves, and their utmost energies are directed to attain it. Some pant after honor, some after pleasure, and many after wealth. What are we most anxious to possess? Is it the favor of God? is it an interest in the atonement Jesus? Or, are we only thirsting after earthly things? Blessed indeed are we, if to do the will of God be the great object of our lives; if to walk agreeably to the light of His revealed Word, be our one undeviating aim.

Jesus as our perfect pattern, left us an example that we should follow his steps. The more we drink into his spirit, the more we shall love and obey our heavenly Father, enjoy a foretaste of heavenly bliss, and be prepared for heavenly glory. True happiness would soon revisit our world, were the name of God universally hallowed- were his kingdom set up in every heart- were his will done on earth, as it is in heaven. O when will this happy period arrive. A great blessing is promised, but this blessing must be sought for by fervent believing prayer.

Christ was the glorious promise under the Old Testament Dispensation- the Holy Spirit is the gracious promise under the New. For this gift, Jesus himself, as Mediator, intercedes for his people- "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." For this gift he commands us to pray with assurance of success; "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

O! that Christians of every name, may be stirred up to seek the Lord until he comes and rains down righteousness upon us; until the Spirit, being poured out from on high, fills our world with light and love, with peace and purity, with grace and glory.

Divine Truth, like the meridian sun, shines with resplendent luster in the Book of God. The glory of Jehovah is the Alpha and Omega of all its revelations. Is a world created? -it is by the Word of God. Is a world redeemed? -it is through the love of God. Every blessing flows from him- all praise belongs to him. Pride wants its share of merit in the work of redemption, but Truth levels the proud pretension in the dust. With what force does the Apostle repel the self-righteous plea, and refute the skeptical cavil. In all his writings, he maintains one constant truth- "By grace are you saved....not of works, lest any man should boast."

The author of all holiness is Almighty God; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them. The meritorious cause of sanctification is Jesus Christ; who, by his death and obedience, has procured for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, to renew our souls after his image in righteousness and true holiness; and therefore he is made unto us sanctification. The instruments which God employs in the hand of the Spirit, to produce the blessing of holiness, are his Word and ordinances, the ministers of his Gospel, and the various dispensations of his providence.

Gospel sanctification consists in the mortification of our corrupt affections, whereby the power of original sin is weakened; and in the vivification or quickening of our souls to a new and divine life, whereby habitual acts of filial obedience are performed.

The work of sanctification extends to the whole man; body, soul, and spirit. The design of God, in our sanctification is, that the mind be enlightened to know himself as the chief good, and his mercy in Christ as the highest blessing; that we be made acquainted with the corruption of our nature, and the remedy which he has provided; that our will be molded into his will, and our constant aim be the promotion of his glory;

that the memory be stored with heavenly truths, and daily replenished from his Holy Word with new subjects for delightful meditation; that the conscience be made tender and alive to the calls of the Spirit, afraid of sin, while delivered from guilty fears through the blood of Jesus; that the affections of love, joy, grief, and fear, be all brought under due regulation, through the indwelling Spirit, and made to run in one uniform channel of evangelical holiness- that those desires of the soul, which are of a more animal nature, be brought into subjection to the Law of Christ; while the body is made subservient to the powers of the renewed mind.

Such ought to be the happy state of every true believer in Jesus; and such, in some measure, is his state, when he walks in love, and in the light of the divine favor.

But, it may be asked- Is his sanctification, while in the body, complete and entire, lacking nothing? Alas! no. Although the above description is true, with respect to what the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, as all his works are like himself, pure and holy; yet, through the remainders of corruption, this blessed work is greatly impeded and retarded in its growth. There still remains much darkness to be dissipated from the mind, much selfishness to be subdued in the will; much forgetfulness of God to be rectified in the memory; much hardness to be softened in the conscience; much irregularity to be removed from the affections; much self-indulgence to be mortified in the animal passions. All this creates that conflict, that up-hill work, that struggling, and wrestling, and fighting, that earnestness in prayer, that cleaving to Jesus, that reliance on his grace, that display of his power, that exercise of his mercy, which are constantly experienced in the eventful life of the true believer.

All these things Paul felt when he said, "I run- I fight- I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And what was the mark at which the Apostle aimed? -perfect holiness. And what the prize which he longed to attain? -perfect happiness through Christ Jesus. This is the longing desire and aim of every true believer.

Is this our experience? Can we say with the Apostle- "when I am weak, then am I strong?" Conscious of our spiritual weakness, and in full reliance on the strength of Jesus, do we in faith draw out of his fullness grace for grace? The enemy may alarm, but he cannot destroy the children of God, for whom Christ died. How sweetly consoling are the Savior's words, "You now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy, no man takes from you."

While running the heavenly race, the believer has many hindrances, and many helps. Does the Devil walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? In this can he rejoice, that, angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. O how numberless are the mercies of Jesus, how multiplied the devices and depths of Satan. The power of this arch-deceiver, though limited and restrained, is yet truly awful. The Scriptures style him, "the god of this world," so extensive is his influence over the hearts of men. They declare that, "he who commits Sin is of the Devil," because he blinds the minds of those who believe not; and, works in the children of disobedience.

Are the children of God out of the reach of this evil one, while journeying to their eternal rest? Ah! no. What says the Scriptures? "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel and God was displeased with this thing." Jesus said to Peter- "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." "Some," says Paul, "are already turned aside after Satan." "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us." The spotless Jesus himself was

tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, whom he drove back by this powerful word, "Get away Satan."

Fear not then, O tempted saint. Jesus, in whom you believe, has vanquished this roaring lion. Are you helpless in yourself? Hear what John says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Are you afraid of falling, one day, by the hand of your spiritual foe? Hear what Paul says, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Then let us not despond. The Spirit of God, who dwells in the hearts of his people, will make us more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. How gracious are the words of Jesus to Peter when Satan desired to sift him- "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." How cheering his love to Paul when buffeted by Satan; "My grace is sufficient for you."

O may we ever lean upon our loving Savior, whose power is infinite. Blessed are those who hear his voice, who follow him in faith and patience, through evil, as well as good report. They and they only are the sheep of his pasture, who thus look unto him and live upon him as the bread of life. Jesus has purchased them with his own blood, he will preserve them by his power, and present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

This Truth, the holy Apostle declared with an inspired distinctness to the church at Rome, "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Oh! blessed and consolatory conclusion! Can we now for a moment doubt his willingness to save? Did he die for us, and will he not preserve us? Did he pray for us, and will he not hear our prayers? Did he invite us to come, and will he forbid our approach? His compassion is not diminished, because he is now in glory. His love is not abated, because the heavens have received him out of our sight. His tenderness is not less susceptible; now that he is removed from the innocent infirmities of our nature. He still can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He still feels in heaven, for his poor afflicted members upon earth. Though Lord of all, having all power in heaven and in earth, he is not insensible to the needs of his people. He is their friend, who loves at all times; and who, when they are gathered together in his name, is ever in the midst of them. If persecuted for his sake, he graciously identifies himself with them, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" If relieved, in the name of a disciple, he condescendingly accepts the benefit, as done to himself, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Oh how inconceivably great is such love as this! Well might the grateful Apostle, who was himself a wonderful subject of it, fervently pray, that the Ephesians might know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and, be filled with all the fullness of God.

Jesus, having loved his own, will love them unto the end, and glorify them with his own glory. His work and ways, like himself, are infinite and everlasting.

The graces of God's Spirit are not, in the hearts of his children, like morning mists which soon disperse; they resemble the morning light, which shines more and more, unto the perfect day. Their faith, like a well-built tower, whose foundation is laid in a rock, can withstand the assaults of the enemy, and the raging of the storm. What are all enemies and storms, however powerful and violent, where brought into contest with Jehovah Jesus? They are weak as the chaff before the whirl wind; or, as the flax before the devouring fire. In the strength of Christ we must, and shall prevail.

Let us then trust, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy. Jesus ever reigns! Reposing with steadfast faith on his Divinity, atonement, and intercession, we may smile in the midst of danger, having nothing to fear but sin. How precious are these truths, whose everlasting lines gladden and support the Church; "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him."

"My Father knows my feeble frame,

He knows how poor I am

Untold he knows it all;

The least temptation serves to draw

My footsteps from my Fathers law,

And make me slide and fall.

Of this, I give him daily proof,

And yet he does not cast me off,

But owns me still as his;

He spares, he pities, he forgives

The most rebellious child that lives,

So great his patience is.

And shall I then a pretext draw

Again to violate his law?

My soul revolts at this;

I'll love, and wonder, and adore.

And beg that I may sin no more

Against such love as his."

Contemplate, O my soul, with rising admiration, the love of God to sinners. Contemplate the freeness, the fullness, the fitness, the all-sufficiency of Christ's salvation. Contemplate the gracious work of the divine Spirit, in its beginning, progress, and completion; until all your powers are lost in wonder, love, and praise!

How amazing is the kindness and love of God our Savior to dying sinners, who cast themselves upon his mercy, and stay upon his word. He infuses into their souls a principle of spiritual life, which is no less than eternal life begun. He creates a divine light in their minds, which discovers their disease and their remedy. He imparts His strength, by which they persevere, and conquer. He becomes their sun and shield; and gives them grace and glory. He declares them to be his portion, to whom it is his good pleasure to give the

kingdom.

The Father has prepared this kingdom for them, from the foundation of the world. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for them in the mansions of glory. The Spirit descends into their hearts to make them a prepared people, and to consecrate them as temples of the living God. The precious blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin. His glorious righteousness claims their admittance into the celestial city, and procures their acceptance with the Father. His lovely image is drawn in lines of grace upon their souls, by the unerring hand of the Eternal Spirit. His countless promises are their daily food and portion; and like reviving cordials, strengthen them when laboring under trials, and contending with the prince of darkness.

Should not such love, of which these instances are but as a drop compared to the mighty ocean, constrain you, O my soul, to love, with all your powers, this adorable Redeemer?

To live to Christ should indeed be the business of your life; and if your business, God will assuredly make it your blessedness.

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