

The Doctrine of Sanctification



Part Four

A. W. Pink



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8. Its Procurer

We have now reached what is to our mind the most important and certainly the most blessed aspect of our many-sided subject, yet that which is the least understood in not a few circles of Christendom. It is the *objective* side of sanctification that we now turn to, that perfect and unforfeitable holiness which every believer has in Christ. We are not now going to write upon sanctification as a moral quality or attribute, nor of that which is a matter of experience or attainment by us; rather shall we contemplate something entirely *outside ourselves*, namely, that which is a fundamental part of our standing and state in Christ. That which we are about to consider is one of those “spiritual blessings” which God has blest us with “in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). It is an immediate consequence of His blood-shedding, and results from our actual union with Him as “the Holy One of God.” It is that which His perfect offering has sanctified us *unto*, as well as what it has sanctified us *from*.

Among all the terrible effects and fruits which sin produces, the two chief are alienation from God and condemnation by God: sin necessarily excludes from His sanctuary, and brings the sinner before the judgment seat of His law. Contrariwise, among all the blessed fruits and effects which Christ’s sacrifice procures, the two chief ones are justification and sanctification: it cannot be otherwise. Inasmuch as Christ’s sacrifice has “put away” (Heb. 9:26), “made an end” (Dan. 9:24) of the sins of His people, they are not only freed from all condemnation, but they are also given the right and the meetness to draw nigh unto God as purged worshippers. Sin not only entails guilt, it *defiles*; and the blood of Christ has not only secured pardon, it cleanses. Yet simple, clear, and conclusive as is this dual fact, Christians find it much harder to apprehend the second part of it than they do the first.

When we first believed in Christ, and “the burden of our sins rolled away,” we supposed that (as one hymn expresses it) we would be “happy all the day.” Assured of God’s forgiveness, that

we had entered His family by the new birth, and that an eternity with Christ in unclouded bliss was our certain inheritance, what could possibly dampen our joy? Ah, but it was not long before we discovered that we were still *sinner*s, living in a world of sin: yea, as time went on, we were made more and more conscious of the sink of iniquity that indwells us, ever sending forth its foul streams, polluting our thoughts, words and actions. This forced from us the agonized inquiry, *How* can such vile creatures as we see, feel, and know ourselves to be, either pray to, serve, or worship the thrice holy God? Only in His own blessed Word can be found a sufficient and a satisfying answer to this burning question.

“The epistle to the Romans, is, as is well known, that part of Scripture in which the question of justification is most fully treated. There, especially, we are taught to think of God as a Judge presiding in the Courts of His holy judgment. Accordingly, the expressions employed throughout that epistle are ‘forensic,’ or ‘judicial.’ They refer to our relation to God, or His relation to us, in His judicial Courts—the great question there being, how criminals can be brought into such a relation to Him, as to have, not criminality, but righteousness, imputed to them.

“But if, in the epistle to the Romans, we see God in the Courts of His judgment, equally in the epistle to the Hebrews we see Him in the Temple of His worship. ‘Sanctified’ is a word that has the same prominence in the epistle to the Hebrews that ‘justified’ has in the epistle to the Romans. It is a Temple-word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His worship, just as ‘justified’ is a forensic word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His judgment. Before there can be any question about serving or worshipping God acceptably, the necessity of His holiness requires that the claims both of the Courts of His judgment, and also of the Courts of His worship, should be fully met. He who is regarded in the judicial Courts of God as an unpardoned criminal, or who, in relation to the Temple of God, is regarded as having the stains of his guilt upon him, cannot be allowed to take his stand among God’s servants. No leper that was not thoroughly cleansed could serve in the Tabernacle. The existence of one stain not adequately covered by compensatory atonement, shuts out from the presence of God.

“We must stand ‘uncharged’ in relation to the judicial Courts of

God and imputatively ‘spotless’ in relation to the Courts of His worship: in other words, we must be perfectly ‘justified’ and perfectly ‘sanctified’ before we can attempt to worship or serve Him. ‘Sanctification,’ therefore, when used in this sense, is not to be contrasted with justification, as if the latter were complete, but the former incomplete and progressive. *Both are complete to the believer.* The same moment that brings the complete ‘justification’ of the fifth of Romans, brings the equally complete ‘sanctification’ of the tenth of Hebrews—both being equally needed in order that God, as respects the claims of His holiness, might be ‘appeased’ or ‘placated’ toward us; and therefore equally needed as prerequisites to our entrance on the worship and service of God in His heavenly Temple: for until wrath is effectually appeased there can be no entrance into heaven.

“The complete and finished sanctification of believers by the blood of Jesus, is the great subject of the ninth and tenth of the Hebrews. ‘The blood of bulls and goats’ gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a title to enter into the courts of the typical tabernacle, but that title was not an abiding title. It was no sooner gained than it was lost by the first recurring taint. Repetition therefore of offering and repetition of sprinkling was needed again and again. The same circle was endlessly trodden and retrodden; and yet never was perpetuity of acceptance obtained. The tabernacle and its services were but shadows; but they teach us that, as ‘the blood of bulls and goats’ gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a temporary title to enter into that typical tabernacle; so, the blood of Christ, once offered, gives to all those who are once sprinkled therewith (and all believers are sprinkled) a title, not temporary, but abiding, to enter into God’s presence as those who are sanctified for Heaven” (B. W. Newton).

“We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering He hath *perfected forever* them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10, 14). These blessed declarations have no reference whatsoever to anything which the Spirit does in the Christian, but relate exclusively to what Christ has secured for them. They speak of that which results from our *identification* with Christ. They affirm that by virtue of the Sacrifice of Calvary every believer is not only counted righteous in the

Courts of God's judgment, but is perfectly hallowed for the Courts of His worship. The precious blood of the Lamb not only delivers from Hell, but it also fits us for Heaven.

By the redemptive work of Christ the entire Church has been set apart, consecrated unto and accepted by God. The grand truth is that the feeblest and most uninstructed believer was as *completely sanctified before God* the first moment that he trusted in Christ, as he will be when he dwells in Heaven in his glorified state. True, both his sphere and his circumstances will then be quite different from what they now are: nevertheless, his title to Heaven, his meetness for the immediate presence of the thrice Holy One, will be no better than it is to-day. It is *his relation to Christ* (and that alone) which qualifies him to enter the Father's House; and it is his relation to Christ (and that alone) which gives him the right to now draw nigh within the veil. True, the believer still carries around with him "this body of death" (a depraved nature), but that *affects not* his perfect standing, his completeness in Christ, his acceptance, his justification and sanctification before God.

But, as we said in an earlier paragraph, the Christian finds it much easier to believe in or grasp the truth of justification, than he does of his present perfect sanctification in Christ. For this reason we deem it advisable to proceed slowly and enter rather fully into this aspect of our subject. Let us begin with our Lord's own words in John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Unto what did Christ allude when He there spoke of sanctifying Himself? Certainly He could not possibly be referring to anything subjective or experimental, for in His own person He was "the Holy One of God," and as such, He could not increase in holiness, or become more holy. His language then must have respect unto what was *objective*, relating to the exercise of His mediatorial office.

When Christ said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," He denoted that He was then on the very point of dedicating Himself to the full and final execution of the work of making Himself a sacrifice for sin, to satisfy all the demands of God's law and Justice. Christ, then, was therein expressing His readiness to present Himself before the Father as the Surety of His People to place Himself on the altar as a vicarious propitiation for His Church. It was "for the sake" of others

that He sanctified Himself: for the sake of His eleven apostles, who are there to be regarded as the representatives of the entire Election of Grace. It is on their behalf, for their express benefit, that He set Himself apart unto the full discharge of His mediatorial office, that the fruit thereof might redound unto them. Christ unreservedly devoted Himself unto God, that His people might reap the full advantages thereof.

The particular end here mentioned of Christ's sanctifying Himself was "that they also might be sanctified through the truth," which is a very faulty rendering of the original, the Greek preposition being "in" and not "through," and there is no article before "truth." The marginal rendering, therefore, is much to be preferred: "that they might be truly sanctified"—Bagster's interlinear and the Revised Version give "sanctified in truth." The meaning is "that they might be" actually, really, verily "sanctified"—in contrast from the typical and ceremonial sanctification which obtained under the Mosaic dispensation: compare John 4:24; Col. 1:6; 1 John 3:18 for "in truth." As the of Christ's sanctifying Himself—devoting Himself as whole burnt offering to God, His people are perfectly sanctified their sins are put away, their persons are cleansed from all defilement; and not only so, but the excellency of His infinitely meritorious work is imputed to them, so that they are perfectly acceptable to God, meet for His presence, fitted for His worship.

"For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14)—not by anything which the Spirit works in them, but solely by what Christ's sanctifying of Himself has wrought for them. It is this sanctification in and through Christ which gives Christians their priestly character, the title to draw near unto God within the veil as purged worshippers. Access to God, or the worship of a people made nigh by blood, was central in the Divinely appointed system of Judaism (Heb. 9:13). The antitype, the substance, the blessed reality of this, is what Christ has secured for His Church. Believers are already perfectly sanctified objectively, as the immediate fruit of the Saviour's sacrifice. Priestly nearness is now their blessed portion in consequence of Christ's priestly offering of Himself. This it is, and nought else, which gives us "boldness to enter into the Holiest" (Heb. 10:19).

Many Christians who are quite clear that they must look alone to

Christ for their justification before God, often fail to view *Him* as their complete sanctification before God. But this ought not to be, for Scripture is just as clear on the one point as on the other; yea, the two are therein inseparably joined together. “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). And here we must dissent from the exposition of this verse given by Charles Hodge (in his commentary) and others of his school, who interpret “sanctification” here as Christ’s Spirit indwelling His people as the Spirit of holiness, transforming them unto His likeness. But this verse is speaking of that sanctification which *Christ is made unto us*, and not that which we are *made by Christ*—the distinction is real and vital, and to ignore or confound it is inexcusable in a theologian.

Christ crucified (see the context of 1 Cor. 1:30—verses 17, 18, 23), “of God is made unto us” four things, and this is precisely the same way that God “made Him (Christ) to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21), namely, objectively and imputatively. First, Christ is “made unto us Wisdom,” objectively, for He is the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, it is true that by the Spirit we are made wise unto salvation, nevertheless, we are far from being as wise as we ought to be—see 1 Corinthians 8:2. But all the wisdom God requires of us is found in Christ, and as the “Wisdom” of the book of Proverbs, He is ours. Second, Christ is “made unto us Righteousness,” objectively, as He is Himself “The Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6), and therefore does the believer exclaim, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24). As the law raises its accusing voice against me, I point to Christ as the One who has, by His active and passive obedience, met its every demand on my behalf.

Third, Christ is “made unto us Sanctification,” *objectively*: in Him we have an absolute purity, and by the imputation to us of the efficacy and merits of His cross-work we who were excluded from God on account of sin, are now given access to Him. If Israel became a holy people when sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats, so that they were readmitted to Jehovah’s worship, how much more has the infinitely valuable blood of Christ sanctified us, so that we may approach God as acceptable worshippers. This

sanctification is not something which we have in our own persons, but was ours in Christ as soon as we laid hold of Him by faith. Fourth, Christ is “made unto us Redemption,” *objectively*: He is in His own person both our Redeemer and Redemption—“in whom we have redemption” (Eph. 1:7). Christ is “made unto us Redemption” not by enabling us to redeem ourselves, but by Himself paying the price.

1 Corinthians 1:30, then, affirms that we are *complete* in Christ: that whatever the law demands of us, it has received on our account in the Surety. If we are considered as what we are in ourselves, not as we stand in Christ (as one with Him), then a thousand things may be “laid to our charge.” It may be laid to our charge that we are woefully ignorant of many parts of the Divine will: but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Wisdom. It may be laid to our charge that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: but the sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Righteousness. It may be laid to our charge that we do many things and fail to do many others which unfit us for the presence of a holy God: but the sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Sanctification. It may be laid to our charge that we are largely in bondage to the flesh: but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30, then, is a *unit*: we cannot define the “wisdom” and the “sanctification” as what the Spirit works in us, and the “righteousness” and the “redemption” as what Christ has wrought for us: all four are either objective or subjective. Christ is here said to be “sanctification” unto us, just as He is our righteousness and redemption. To suppose that the sanctification here spoken of is that which is wrought in us, would oblige me to explain the righteousness and redemption here spoken of, as that which we had in ourselves; but such a thought Mr. Hodge would rightly have rejected with abhorrence. The righteousness which Christ is “made unto us” is most certainly not the righteousness which He works in us (the Romanist heresy), but the righteousness which He wrought out for us. So it is with the sanctification which Christ is “made unto us” it is not in ourselves, but in Him; it is not an incomplete and progressive thing, but a perfect and eternal one.

God has made Christ to be sanctification unto us by imputing to us the infinite purity and excellency of His sacrifice. We are made

nigh to God by Christ's blood (Eph. 2:13) *before* we are brought nigh to Him by the effectual call of the Spirit (1 Pet. 2:9): the former being the necessary foundation of the latter—in the types the oil could only be placed upon the blood. And it is on this account we “are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). How vastly different is this—how immeasurably superior to—what the advocates of “the higher life” or the “victorious life” set before their hearers and readers! It is not merely that Christ is able to do this or willing to do that for us, but every Christian is *already* “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” My ignorance of this does not alter the blessed fact, and neither does my failure to clearly understand nor the weakness of my faith to firmly grasp it, in anywise impair it. Nor have my feelings or experience anything whatever to do with it: *God* says it, *God has* done it, and nothing can alter it.

It has been pointed out in the earlier papers of this series [previous booklets] that the Scriptures present the believer's sanctification from several distinct points of view, the chief of which are, first, our sanctification in the eternal purpose of God, when in His decree He chose us in Christ “that we should be *holy* and without blame before Him” (Eph. 1:4). That is what is referred to at the beginning of Hebrews 10:10, “by the which *will* we are sanctified.” This is our sanctification by God the Father (Jude 1), which was considered by us in the 7th chapter [booklet three] under “The Author of our Sanctification.” Second, there is the *fulfilling* of that “will” of God, the accomplishing of His eternal purpose by our actual sanctification through the sacrifice of Christ. That is what is referred to in “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). This is our sanctification by God the Son, and is what we are now considering. Third, there is the *application* of this sanctification to the individual by the Holy Spirit, when He separates him from those who are dead in sins by quickening him, and by the new birth imparting to him a new nature. This is our sanctification by God the Spirit.

Fourth, there is the *fruit* of these in the Christian's character and conduct whereby he is separated in his life and walk from the world which lieth in the Wicked one, and this is by the Holy Spirit's working in him and applying the Word to him, so that he is (in

measure—for now we see “through a glass darkly”) enabled to apprehend by faith his separation to God by the precious blood of Christ. Yet both his inward and outward life is far from being perfect, for though possessing anew and spiritual nature, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Those around him know little or nothing of the inward conflict of which he is the subject: they see his outward failures, but hear not his secret groanings before God. It is not yet made manifest what he shall be, but though very imperfect at present through indwelling sin, yet the promise is sure “when He shall appear *we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*”

Now though in this fourth sense our practical sanctification is incomplete, this in nowise alters the fact, nor to the slightest degree invalidates it, that our sanctification in the first three senses mentioned above is entire and eternal, that “by one offering Christ hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Though these three phases of the believer’s sanctification are quite distinct as to their development or manifestation, yet they are blessedly combined together, and form our one complete acceptance before God. That which we are here considering has to do with the *objective* side of our subject: by which we mean that it is something entirely *outside of ourselves*, resulting from what Christ has done for us. It is that which we have in Christ and by Christ, and therefore it can be received and enjoyed by *faith alone*. O what a difference it makes to the peace and joy of the soul once the child of God firmly grasps the blessed truth that a perfect sanctification is his present and inalienable portion, that God has made Christ to be unto him sanctification as well as righteousness.

Every real Christian has already been sanctified or set apart *as holy unto God* by the precious blood of the Lamb. But though many believers are consciously and confessedly “*justified* by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), yet not a few of them are unwittingly dishonouring that blood by striving (in their desires after holiness of life) to *offer God* “entire consecration” or “full surrender” (as they call it) in order to get sanctified—so much “living sacrifice” they present to God for so much sanctification. They have been beguiled into the attempt to lay *self* on some imaginary “altar” so that their sinful nature might be “consumed by the fire of the Spirit.” Alas,

they neither enter into God's estimate of Christ's blood, nor will they accept the fact that "the heart is deceitful above all things and *incurably* wicked" (Jer. 17:9). They neither realize that God has "made Christ to be sanctification unto them" nor that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7).

It is greatly to be regretted that many theologians have confined their views far too exclusively to the *legal* aspect of the atonement, whereas both the Old Testament types and the New Testament testimony, with equal clearness, exhibit its efficacy in all our relations to God. Because we are in Christ, *all* that He is for us must be ours. "The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, and the believer does not more truly take his place in Christ before the justice of God as one against whom there is no charge, than he takes his place in Christ before the holiness of God as one upon whom there is *no stain*" (James. Inglis in "Way-marks in the wilderness," to whom we are indebted for much in this and the preceding chapter). Not only is the believer "*justified* by His blood" (Rom 5:9), but we are "*sanctified* (set apart, consecrated unto God, fitted and adorned for His presence) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). It is *this* blessed aspect of sanctification which the denominational creeds and the writings of the Puritans almost totally ignored.

In the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly the question is asked, "What is sanctification?" To which the following answer is returned: "Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby, they whom God hath before the foundation of the world chosen to be holy, are in time through the powerful operation of His Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin and rise unto newness of life."

Now far be it from us to sit in judgment upon such an excellent and helpful production as this Catechism, which God has richly blest to thousands of His people, or that we should make any harsh criticisms against men whose shoes we are certainly not worthy to unloose. Nevertheless, we are assured that were its compilers on

earth today, they would be the last of all to lay claim to any infallibility, nor do we believe they would offer any objection against their statements being brought to the bar of Holy Scripture. The best of men are but men at the best, and therefore we must call no man “Father.” A deep veneration for servants of God and a high regard for their spiritual learning must not deter us from complying with “*Prove all things: hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. 5:21). The Bereans were commended for testing the teachings even of the apostle Paul, “And searched the Scriptures daily *whether* those things were so” (Acts 17:11). It is in this spirit that we beg to offer two observations on the above quotation.

First, the definition or description of sanctification of the Westminster divines is altogether *inadequate*, for it entirely omits the most important aspect and fundamental element in the believer’s sanctification: it says nothing about our sanctification *by Christ* (Heb. 10:10; 13:12), but confines itself to the work of the Spirit, which is founded upon that of the Son. This is truly a serious loss, and affords another illustration that God has not granted light on *all* His Word to any one man or body of men. A fuller and better answer to the question of, “What is sanctification?” would be, “Sanctification is, first, that act of God whereby He set the elect apart in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be holy. Second, it is that perfect holiness which the Church has in Christ and that excellent purity which she has before God by virtue of Christ’s cleansing blood. Third, it is that work of God’s Spirit which, by His quickening operation, sets them apart from those who are dead in sins, conveying to them a holy life or nature, etc.”

Thus we cannot but regard this particular definition of the Larger Catechism as being defective, for it commences at the middle, instead of starting at the beginning. Instead of placing before the believer that complete and perfect sanctification which God has made Christ to be unto him, it occupies him with the incomplete and progressive work of the Spirit. Instead of moving the Christian to look away from himself with all his sinful failures, unto Christ in whom he is “complete” (Col. 2:10), it encouraged him to look within, where he will often search in vain for the fine gold of the new creation amid all the dross and mire of the old creation. This is to leave him without the joyous assurance of knowing that he has

been “perfected forever” by the one offering of Christ (Heb. 10:14); and if he be destitute of *that*, then doubts and fears must constantly assail him, and the full assurance of faith elude every striving after it.

Our second observation upon this definition is, that its wording is faulty and misleading. Let the young believer be credibly assured that he will “more and more die unto sin and rise unto newness of life,” and what will be the inevitable outcome? As he proceeds on his way, the Devil assaulting him more and more fiercely, the inward conflict between the flesh and the Spirit becoming more and more distressing, increasing light from God’s Word more and more exposing his sinful failures, until the cry is forced from him, “I am vile; O wretched man that I am,” what conclusion *must* he draw? Why this: if the Catechism-definition be correct then I was sadly mistaken, *I have never been sanctified at all*. So far from the “more and more die unto sin” agreeing with *his* experience, he discovers that sin is more active within and that he is more alive to sin now, than he was ten years ago!

Will any venture to gainsay what we have just pointed out above, then we would ask the most mature and godly reader, Dare you solemnly affirm, as in the presence of God, that you have “more and more died unto sin?” If you answer, Yes, the writer for one would not believe you. But we do not believe for a moment that *you* would utter such an untruth. Rather do we think we can hear you saying, “Such has been my deep *desire*, such has been my sincere *design* in using the means of grace, such is still my daily *prayer*; but alas, alas! I find as truly and as frequently today as I ever did in the past that, “When I would do good, evil is present with me; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Rom. 7). Ah, there is a vast difference between what *ought* to be, and that which actually *obtains* in our experience.

That we may not be charged with partiality, we quote from the “Confession of Faith” adopted by the Baptist Association, which met in Philadelphia 1742, giving the first two sections of their brief chapter on sanctification: 1. “They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit in them through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, are also (a) farther sanctified, really and personally, through the

same virtue, (b) by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; (c) the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, (d) and the several lusts thereof *more and more weakened* and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. 2. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still *some remnants* of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war.”—*Italics ours.*

Like the previous one, this description of sanctification by the Baptists leaves something to be desired, for it makes no clear and direct statement upon the all-important and flawless holiness which every believer has *in Christ*, and that spotless and impeccable purity which is *upon* him by God’s imputation of the cleansing efficacy of His Son’s sacrifice. Such a serious omission is too vital for us to ignore. In the second place, the words which we have placed in italics not only perpetuate the faulty wording of the Westminster Catechism but also convey a misleading conception of the present condition of the Christian. To speak of “some remnants of corruption” still remaining in the believer, necessarily implies that by far the greater part of his original corruption has been removed, and that only a trifling portion of the same now remains. But something vastly different from *that* is what every true Christian discovers to his daily grief and humiliation.

Contrast, dear reader, with the “some remnants of corruption” remaining in the Christian (an expression frequently found in the writings of the Puritans) the honest confession of the heavenly-minded Jonathan Edwards: “When I look into my heart and take a view of its wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than Hell. And it appears to me that, were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fullness of the great Jehovah, and the arm of His grace stretched forth in all the majesty of His power and in all the glory of His sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins below Hell itself. It is affecting to think how ignorant I was when a young Christian, of the bottomless depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy, and filth left in my heart.” The closer we walk with God, the more conscious will we be of our utter depravity.

Among the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (Episcopalian) there is none treating of the important doctrine of sanctification! We believe that all the Reformation “standards” (creeds, confessions, and catechisms) will be searched in vain for any clear statement upon the perfect holiness which the Church has in Christ or of God’s making Him to be, imputatively, sanctification unto His people. In consequence of this, most theological systems have taught that while justification is accomplished the moment the sinner truly believes in Christ, yet is his sanctification only then begun, and is a protracted process to be carried on throughout the remainder of this life by means of the Word and ordinances, seconded by the discipline of trial and affliction. But if this be the case, then there must be a time in the history of every believer when he is “justified from all things” and yet *unfit* to appear in the presence of God; and before he *can* appear there, the process must be completed—he must attain what is called “entire sanctification” and be able to say “I have no sin,” which, according to 1 John 1:8, would be the proof of self-deception.

Here, then, is a real dilemma. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and yet, according to the doctrine of “progressive sanctification,” until we can say it (though it be inarticulately in the moment of death) we are not meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. What an awful thought it is, that Christ may come any hour to those who realize that the process of sanctification within them is *incomplete*. But more: not only are those who have no complete sanctification unfit for eternal glory, but it would be daring presumption for them to boldly enter the Holiest now—the “new and living way” is not yet available for them, they cannot draw near “with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” What wonder, then, that those who believe this doctrine are plunged into perplexity, that such a cloud rests over their acceptance with God. But thank God, many triumph over their creed: their hearts are better than their heads, otherwise their communion with God and their approach to the throne of His grace would be impossible.

Now in blessed contrast from this inadequate doctrine of theology, the glorious Gospel of God reveals to us a *perfect* Saviour. It exhibits One who has not only made complete satisfaction to the righteous Ruler and Judge, providing for His

people a perfect righteousness before Him, but whose sacrifice has also fitted us to worship and serve a holy God acceptably, and to approach the Father with full confidence and filial love. A knowledge of the truth of justification is not sufficient to thus assure the heart: there must be something more than a realization that the curse of the law is removed—if the conscience be still defiled, if the eye of God rests upon us as unpurged and unclean, then confidence before Him is impossible, for we feel utterly unfit for His ineffable presence. But forever blessed be His name, the precious Gospel of God announces that the blood of Christ meets *this* exigency also.

“Now where remission of these (sins) is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:18, 19). The same sacrifice which has procured the remission of our sins, provides the right for us to draw nigh unto God as acceptable worshippers. “By His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:13). Now that which gives the One who took our place *the right* to enter Heaven itself, also gives us the right to take *the same* place. That which entitled Christ to enter Heaven was “His own blood,” and that which entitles the feeblest believer to approach the very throne of God “with boldness,” is “the blood of Jesus.” Our title to enter Heaven *now*, in spirit, is precisely the same as *Christ’s* was!

The same precious blood which appeased the wrath of God, covers every stain of sin’s guilt and defilement; and not only so, but in the very place of that which it covers and cleanses, it leaves its own excellency; so that because of its finite purity and merit, the Christian is regarded not only as guiltless and unprovable, but also as *spotless and holy*. Oh to realize by faith that we are assured of the same welcome by God now as His beloved Son received when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. God views us *in Christ* His “Holy One,” as possessing a holiness as perfect as is the righteousness in which we are accepted, both of them being as perfect as Christ Himself. “In us, as we present ourselves before Him through Christ, God *sees no sin!* He looks on us in the face of His Anointed, and there He sees us purer than the heavens” (Alexander Carson).

There is a perfect sanctification in Christ which became ours the

moment we first believed in Him—little though we *realized* it at the time. There will also be a perfect *conformity* to this in us, an actual making good thereof, when we shall be glorified and enter that blessed realm where sin is unknown. In between these two things is the believer's present life on earth, which consists of a painful and bewildering commingling of lights and shadows, joys and sorrows, victories and defeats—the latter *seeming* to greatly preponderate in the cases of many, especially so the longer they live. There is an unceasing warfare between the flesh and the spirit, each bringing forth “after its own kind,” so that groans ever mingle with the Christian's songs. The believer finds himself alternating between thanking God for deliverance from temptation and contritely confessing his deplorable yielding to temptation. Often is he made to cry, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24). Such has been for upwards of twenty-five years the experience of the writer, and it is still so.

Now just as in the commercial world there are a multitude of medical charlatans announcing sure remedies for the most incurable diseases, and filling their pockets at the expense of those who are foolish enough to believe their fairy-tales; so there are numerous “quacks” in the religious world, claiming to have a cure for indwelling sin. Such a paragraph as we have just written above, would be eagerly seized by these mountebanks, who, casting up hands and eyes of holy horror, would loudly express their pity for such “a needless tragedy.” They would at once affirm that such an experience, so largely filled with defeat, was because the poor man has never been “sanctified,” and would insist that what he needed to do was “to lay his all on the altar” and “receive the second blessing,” the “baptism of the Spirit,” or as some call it, “enter into the victorious life” by fully trusting Christ for victory.

There are some perverters of the Gospel who, in effect, represent Christ as only *aiding* sinners to work out a righteousness of their own: they bring in Christ as a mere make-weight to supply their deficiency, or they throw the mantle of His mercy over their failures. Some of the religious quacks we have referred to above would be loud in their outcry against such a travesty of the grace of God in Christ, insisting that we can be justified by nought but His blood. And yet *they* have nothing better to set before their dupes

when it comes to “perfect sanctification” or “full salvation through fully trusting Jesus.” Christ they say will aid us in accomplishing what we have vainly attempted in our own strength, and by fully trusting Him we now shall find easy what before we found so arduous. But *God’s* Word supplies no warrant to expect sinless perfection in this life, and such teaching can only tend to fatal deception or bitter disappointment.

Those we have referred to above generally separate justification and sanctification both in fact and in time. Yea, they hold that a man may pass through the former and yet be devoid of the latter, and represent them as being attained by two distinct acts of the soul, divided it may be by an interval of years. They exhort Christians to seek sanctification very much as they exhort sinners to seek justification. Those who attain to this “sanctification,” they speak of as being inducted into a superior grade of Christians, having now entered upon “the *higher* life.” Some refer to this experience as “the second blessing:” by the first, forgiveness of sins is received through faith in the Atonement; by the second, we receive deliverance from the power (some add “the presence”) of sin by trusting in the efficacy of Christ’s Name—a dying Saviour rescues from Hell, an ever-living Saviour now delivers from Satan.

The question may be asked, But ought not the Christian to “present his body a living sacrifice unto God?” Most assuredly, yet *not* for the purpose of *obtaining* sanctification, nor yet for the improving or purifying of “the flesh,” the sinful nature, the “old man.” The exhortation of Romans 12:1 (as its “therefore” plainly shows—the “mercies of God” pointing back to 5:1, 2; 6:5, 6; 8:30, etc.) is a call for us to live in the power of what is ours in Christ. The presenting of our bodies “a living sacrifice to God” is the practical recognition that we *have been* sanctified or consecrated to Him, and we are to do so not in order to get our bodies sanctified, but in the gracious assurance that they are already “holy.”

The Christian cannot obtain a right view of the truth of sanctification so long as he separates that blessing from justification, or while he confines his thoughts to a progressive work of grace being wrought within him by the Holy Spirit. “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11): observe that

we are “sanctified” just as we are “justified”—in the Name of Another! “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which *are* sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18): when we receive the “forgiveness” of our sins, we also receive “an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith.” The prayer of Christ, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17), is fulfilled as we obtain a spiritual *knowledge* of the Truth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not by self-efforts, by any “consecration” of our own, by attempts to “lay our all on the altar” that we enter into what Christ has procured for His people, but *by faith’s appropriation* of what God’s Word sets before us.

In Christ, and in Him alone, does the believer possess a perfect purity. Christ *has* consecrated us to God by the offering of Himself unto Him for us. His sacrifice has delivered us from defilement and the ensuing estrangement, and restored us to the favour and fellowship of God. The Father Himself views the Christian as identified with and united to His “Holy One.” There are no degrees and can be no “progress” in *this* sanctification: an unconverted person is absolutely unholy, and a converted person is absolutely holy. God’s standard of holiness is not what the Christian becomes by virtue of the Spirit’s work in us here, but what Christ is as seated at His own right hand. Every passage in the New Testament which addresses believers as “saints”—holy ones—refutes the idea that the believer is not yet sanctified and will not be so until the moment of death.

Nor does the idea of a progressive sanctification, by which the Christian “more and more dies unto sin,” agree with the recorded experience of the most mature saints. The godly John Newton (author of “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” etc.) when speaking of the expectations which he cherished at the outset of his Christian life, wrote, “But alas! these my golden expectations have been like South Sea dreams. I have lived hitherto a poor sinner, and I believe I shall die one. Have I, then, gained nothing? Yes, I have gained that which I once would rather have been without—such accumulated proof of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my heart as I hope by the Lord’s blessing has, in some measure, taught me to know what I mean when I say, ‘Behold I am vile!’ I was ashamed of myself when I began to serve Him, I am more

ashamed of myself now, and I expect to be most ashamed of myself when He comes to receive me to Himself. But oh! I rejoice in Him, that He is not ashamed of me!” Ah, as the Christian grows in grace, he grows more and more *out of love with himself*.

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, Holiness to the Lord. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted of before the Lord” (Ex. 28:36-38). These verses set before us one of the most precious typical pictures to be found in the Old Testament. Aaron, the high priest, was dedicated and devoted exclusively to the Lord. He served in that office on the behalf of others, as their mediator. He stood before God as the representative of Israel, bearing their names on his shoulders and on his heart (Ex. 28:12, 29). Israel, the people of God, were both represented by and *accepted* in Aaron.

That which was set forth in Exodus 28:36-38 was not a type of “the way of salvation” but had to do entirely with the approach unto the thrice holy God of His own sinning and failing people. Though the sacrifices offered on the annual day of atonement delivered them from the curse of the law, godly individuals in the nation must have been painfully conscious that *sin* marred their very obedience and defiled their prayers and praises. But through the high priest their service and worship was acceptable to God. The inscription worn on his forehead “Holiness to the Lord,” was a solemn appointment by which Israel was impressively taught that holiness became the House of God, and that none who are unholy can possibly draw near unto Him. In Leviticus 8:9 the golden plate bearing the inscription is designated “the holy crown,” for it was set over and above all the vestments of Aaron.

Now Aaron foreshadowed Christ as the great High Priest who is “over the House of God” (Heb. 10:21). Believers are both represented by and accepted in Him. The “Holiness to the Lord” which was “*always*” upon Aaron’s head, pointed to the essential holiness of Christ, who “*ever* liveth to make intercession for us.” Because of our legal and vital union with Christ, *His* holiness is

ours: the perfections of the great High Priest is the measure of our acceptance with God. Christ has also “borne the iniquity of our holy things”—made satisfaction for the defects of our worship—so that they are not laid to our charge; the sweet incense of His merits (Rev. 8:3) rendering our worship acceptable to God. By Him not only were our sins put away and our persons made acceptable, but our service and worship is rendered pleasing too: “To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Here, then, is the answer to the pressing question, How can a moral leper be fitted for the presence of God? We need a perfect holiness as well as a perfect righteousness, in order to have access to Him. The Holy One cannot look upon sin, and were we to approach Him in a way wherein He could not look upon us as being perfectly holy, we could not draw nigh unto Him at all. *Christ* is the all-sufficient answer to our every problem, the One who meets our every need. The precious blood of Jesus has separated the believer from all evil, removed all defilement, and made him nigh unto God in all the acceptableness of His Son. How vastly different is this from that conception which limits sanctification to our experiences and attainments! How definitely better is God’s way to man’s way, and how far are His thoughts on this above ours!

Now it is in the New Testament Epistles that we are shown most fully the reality and substance of what was typed out under Judaism. First, we read, “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one” (Heb. 2:11). Christ is both our sanctification and our Sanctifier. He is our Sanctifier, first, by His blood putting away our sins and cleansing us from all defilement. Second, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, for whatever He doth, He does as “the Spirit of Christ” who procured Him (Psa. 68:18 and Acts 2:33) for His people. Third, by communicating a holy life unto us (John 10:10): the whole stock of grace and holiness is in His hands, He communicating the same unto His people (John 1:16). Fourth, by appearing in Heaven as our representative: *He* being “Holiness to the Lord” *for us*. Fifth, by applying and blessing His Word to His people, so that they are washed thereby (Eph. 5:26). He is our sanctification because the holiness of His nature, as well as His obedience, is imputed to us (1 Cor. 1:30).

“We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus

Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). The Christian will never have right thoughts on this subject until he perceives that his sanctification *before God* was accomplished at Calvary. As we read, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you *holy* and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight” (Col. 1:21, 22): By His work at the cross, Christ presents the Church unto God in all the excellency of His perfect sacrifice. In these passages it is not at all a question of any work which is wrought in us, but of what Christ’s oblation has secured *for us*. By virtue of His sacrifice, believers have been set apart unto God in all Christ’s purity and merits, a sure title being accorded them for Heaven. God accounts us holy according to the holiness of Christ’s sacrifice, the full value of which rests upon the least instructed, the feeblest, and most tried Christian on earth.

So infinitely sufficient is Christ’s oblation for us that “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). As we read again, “Ye are *complete* in Him” (Col. 2:10), and this, because His work was complete. All true believers are in the everlasting purpose of God, and in the actual accomplishment of that purpose by the Lord Jesus, perfectly justified and perfectly sanctified. But all believers are not *aware* of that blessed fact; far from it. Many are confused and bewildered on this subject. One reason for that is, that so many are looking almost entirely to human teachers for instructions, instead of relying upon the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth, and searching the Scriptures for a knowledge of the same. The religious world today is a veritable “Babel of tongues,” and all certainty is at an end if we turn away from the Word (failing to make it our *chief* study) and lean upon preachers. Alas, how many in professing Protestantism are little better off than the poor Papists, who receive unquestioningly what the “priest” tells them.

It is only as we read God’s Word, mixing faith therewith (Heb. 4:2) and appropriating the same unto ourselves, that the Christian can enter into *God’s* thoughts concerning him. In the sacred Scriptures, and nowhere else, can the believer discover what God has made Christ to be unto him and what He has made him to be in Christ. So too it is in the Scriptures, and nowhere else, that we can

learn the truth about *ourselves*, that “in the flesh (what we are by nature as the depraved descendants of fallen Adam) there dwelleth *no* good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Until we learn to distinguish (as God does) between the “I” and the “sin which dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:20) there can be no settled peace. Scripture knows nothing of the sanctification of “the old man,” and as long as we are hoping for any improvement in him, we are certain to meet with disappointment. If we are to “worship God in the Spirit” and “*rejoice* in Christ Jesus” we must learn to have “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

“Wherefore Jesus, also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). The precious blood of Christ has done more than simply make expiation for their sins: it has also set them apart to God as His people. It is that which has brought them *into fellowship* with the Father Himself. By the shedding of His blood for us, Christ made it consistent with the honour and holiness of God to take us as His peculiar people; it also procured the Holy Spirit who has (by regeneration) fitted us for the privileges and duties of our high calling. Thus, Christ has sanctified His people both objectively and subjectively. We are “sanctified with His own blood,” first, as it was an *oblation* to God; second, as its *merits* are imputed to us; third, as its *efficacy* is applied to us.

Christ’s blood “cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 7) in a threefold way. First, Godwards, by blotting out our sins and removing our defilement from His view (as Judge). Second, by procuring the Holy Spirit, by whom we receive “the *washing* of regeneration” (Titus 3:5). Third, by our consciences being “purged” (Heb. 9:14) as *faith lays hold* of these blessed facts, and thus we are fitted to “serve the living God!” Herein we may perceive how God puts the fullest honour on His beloved Son, by making Him not only the Repairer of our ruin and the triumphant Undoer of the Serpent’s work (1 John 3:8), but also giving us His own perfect standing before God and communicating His own holy nature unto His people—for a branch cannot be in the true vine without partaking of its life.

In the person of Christ God beholds a holiness which abides His closest scrutiny, yea, which rejoices and satisfies His heart; and

whatever Christ is before God, He is for His people—”whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered” (Heb. 6:20), “now to appear in the presence of God *for us*” (Heb. 9:24)! In Christ’s holiness we are meet for that place unto which Divine grace has exalted us, so that we are “made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6) This is not accomplished by any experience, separated by a long process from our justification, but is a blessed fact since the moment we first believed on Christ. We are in Christ, and how can any one be *in Him*, and yet not be perfectly sanctified? From the first moment we were “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:17), we are “*holy* brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1). *This* is what the Christian’s faith needs to lay hold of and rest on, upon the authority of Him that cannot lie. Nevertheless, the best taught, the most spiritual and mature Christian, apprehends the truth but feebly and inadequately, for now “we see through a glass darkly.”

True, there is such a thing as a growth *in the knowledge* of sanctification, that is, providing our thoughts are formed by the Word of God. There is an experimental entering into the practical enjoyment of what God has made Christ to be unto us, so that by faith therein our thoughts and habits, affections and associations are affected thereby. There is such a thing as our apprehending the glorious standing and state which Divine grace has given us in the Beloved, and exhibiting the influence of the same upon our character and conduct. But *that* is not what we are *here* treating of. That which we are now considering is the wondrous and glorious fact that the Christian was as completely sanctified in God’s view the first moment he laid hold of Christ by faith, as he will be when every vestige of sin has disappeared from his person, and he stands before Him glorified in spirit and soul and body.

But the question may be asked, What provision has God made to meet the needs of His people sinning *after* they are sanctified? This falls not within the compass of the present aspect of our subject. Yet briefly, the answer is, The ministry of Christ on high as our great High Priest (Heb. 7:25) and Advocate (1 John 2:1); and their penitently confessing their sins, which secures their forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). The sins of the Christian mar his communion with God and hinder his enjoyment of His salvation, but they affect not his standing and state in Christ. If I judge not

myself for my sinful failures and falls, the chastening rod will descend upon me, yet wielded not by an angry God, but by my loving Father (Heb. 12:5-11).

We are not unmindful of the fact that there is not a little in this chapter which worldly-minded professors may easily pervert to their own ruin—what truth of Scripture is not capable of being “wrested?” But that is no reason why God’s people should be *deprived* of one of the choicest and most nourishing portions of the Bread of Life! Other articles in this series [future booklets] are thoroughly calculated to “preserve the balance of truth.”

The fourth of seven booklets.

