

SANCTIFICATION.

AS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE.

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LOUISVILLE, KY.
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SANCTIFICATION.

AS TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE.

IN studying the teaching of the Bible in regard to sanctification, it is fortunate that we have to determine the meanings of only one Hebrew and of only one Greek word, whose meanings are beset with no difficulty, viz., *kadesh* and *hagiazein*. Both these words primarily mean to separate, the idea being that the separation is for sacred purposes. Here are a few examples of the use of *kadesh* in the Old Testament:

Gen. ii. 3, "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."

Ex. xxix. 44, "I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron and his sons will I sanctify to minister to me in the priest's office."

I. Sam. xvi. 5, "He sanctified Jesse and his sons and called them to sacrifice."

Joel ii. 16, "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation."

It is plain that in these passages the meaning of sanctify is to separate, or set apart to sacred uses.

In the New Testament we find a precisely similar use of *hagiazain*.

Matt. iv. 5, "The devil taketh him up into the holy city," etc. In this passage "holy" cannot mean pure and pious, for Jerusalem was just the opposite. The meaning must be that the city was separated, or set apart, for the worship of God.

Matt. xxii. 17-19, "Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? . . . for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?" Here it is plain that the temple separated for sacred uses the gold brought to it, and the altar did the same for the gift.

John xvii. 19, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself," etc. Since Jesus was always pure and holy, this cannot mean that He became so for the sake of His people. The meaning evidently is that He separated Himself for their sakes, and set Himself apart to the work of their redemption.

SECONDARY SENSE.

But the word *hagiazain* is used in a secondary sense, which is the most usual, as meaning to make pure and godly: e. g.

John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

Romans xv. 16, "Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."

I. Thess. iv. 7, "For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification."

I. Thess. v. 23, "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly."

Col. i. 21-22, "And you who being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy (*hagion*) and without blemish and un-reprovable before him."

I. Pet. i, 15-17, "but like as he which called you is holy (*hagion*), be ye also holy (*hagioi*) in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy (*hagioi*) because I am holy (*hagios*)."

In these and similar passages the meaning evidently is to make pure and godly.

It is in this secondary sense that we commonly use the word when we speak of Bible sanctification. It is the making of believers pure and godly.

TWO SORTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is important to bear in mind just here that there are two sorts of righteousness set forth in the Bible. First—The righteousness of

Christ, which is imputed to us, and by which we are justified. Righteousness means simply right doing. We did wrong and our wrongdoing is imputed to Christ; while He did right and His right doing is imputed to us. We receive this imputed righteousness when we believe, and by it we are justified by faith. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe," etc. Rom. iii. 21-22.

"Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Rom. v. 1.

This righteousness admits of no degrees. It is perfect. We are completely and forever justified the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our justification is instantaneous and complete.

Second—The other sort of righteousness, or right doing, is that which is wrought out in us by the Holy Spirit, who worketh in us "both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 13. This righteousness admits of degrees. It is this by which we are sanctified, and until it becomes perfect our sanctification is incomplete. We are justified by faith, but

we are not sanctified by faith. It is true that our faith is an important factor in our sanctification, but we do not secure perfect sanctification by an act of faith, while we do thus secure perfect justification. Justification is something done for us. Sanctification is something done in us, and it is begun when we believe. The righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, is perfect at the start, and so our justification is perfect the moment we believe. Our righteousness, however, by which we are sanctified is very far from perfect, and hence our sanctification is incomplete, until it is wrought out in us by the Holy Spirit through our lives.

THE AGENT IN SANCTIFICATION.

The Holy Spirit is the agent in our sanctification. It is He who does the work.

II. Thess. ii. 13, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Phil. ii. 13, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." See also I. Peter i. 1; Rom. xv. 16; I. Thess. v. 23; Gal. v. 22.

While the Holy Spirit is the efficient agent in sanctification, the believer co-operates.

THE MEANS.

The truth is the means used by the Holy Spirit in our sanctification. Other means are incidental and in order to make the truth efficacious.

John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth."

Eph. v. 25-26, "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word," etc.

I. Pet. ii. 2, "As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby."

THE ORGAN.

Obedience is the organ of sanctification. I use the term organ for lack of a better.

John vii. 17, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching," etc.! Obedience here is the organ of spiritual knowledge, and so of sanctification.

I. Pet. i. 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." It is

thus through obedience that our souls are purified or sanctified.

SANCTIFICATION GRADUAL.

While the first sense (separation) sanctification is sudden, yet in the second sense (purification) it is gradual; "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Mark iv. 28. Our giving ourselves to God does not make us better; we simply put ourselves in a position to become better. The patient is no better for putting himself under the care of the physician—he has simply put himself in a position to become better, and he gets better as the treatment proceeds. It is a transfer of ownership and control. The act of transfer does not benefit the thing transferred, but it is benefited by what the new owner does to it. So when we surrender our hearts to Christ, we are not thereby improved; the improvement comes from what God does to us and in us, and this is gradual.

John xv. 2, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bear more fruit."

Gal. v. 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance."

Christians are to bear fruit, and this is a gradual process. No fruit ever ripened suddenly. Thus there can be no sudden sanctification. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" No more can we suddenly increase our spiritual stature. When we are born again we are babes in Christ, and we are to be fed on the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby, and growth is gradual.

Phil. i. 6, "Being confident of this very thing that he which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." This proves that the process is gradual. It was begun when the Philippians believed, and would be perfect at "the day of Christ." Paul writes to the Ephesians to the same effect. He hopes (Eph. iv. 15) that they "speaking the truth in love may grow up into all things into him which is the head, even Christ." Sanctification is a growth and not an explosion.

There are, of course, stages of growth; and some grow more rapidly than others, in proportion as they comply with the conditions of growth. But there is no sudden completion of the Christian growth—nothing to correspond to what some persons call "the second bless-

ing." There are hundreds of blessings all along the stages of growth. We not only have a second blessing, but a third, a fourth, a tenth, a hundredth, etc., etc.

NO SINLESSNESS IN THIS LIFE.

In the very nature of the case there can be no sinlessness in this life for those who have once sinned. God requires that all men do their best from the dawn of their moral consciousness until death. No man can do more than his duty. He is to love God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. He can never go beyond that. Sin brings incapacity as well as guilt. God does not lower the demands of His law to suit man's self-inflicted incapacity. It is as if the man with five talents had squandered two of them, and had then resolved to do the best he could. The right use of five talents brought other five, so that he was due his master at the day of account ten talents. Having then squandered two of the talents, the best he could possibly do with the three remaining (leaving out of account the time lost) was to gain another three, so that, instead of having ten at last, the best he could do would be to have six. Thus God requires of us more than we can possibly do, after we

have squandered part of what has been entrusted to us. All men have squandered part of their talents, and therefore no man can come up to the requirements of God's holy law, and hence no man can live a sinless life.

It is as if I borrowed \$1,000, giving my note therefor, and after squandering \$600 of it, should offer the remaining \$400 in payment, claiming that since that was now the very best I could do, it cancelled the debt. My self-inflicted inability to pay does not lessen the debt one cent. Since all have squandered time and talents, it is necessarily impossible for any to come up to the requirements of the law of God, and therefore impossible for any to live a sinless life.

The teaching of Scripture is plain upon this point.

Romans vii. 21-23, "I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of sin which is in my members." See also Gal. v. 17.

I. John i. 8, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." This is plain; and it explains what comes after in this same epistle (iii. 9): "Whosoever is

begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God." Had this second passage stood alone it might have been understood as teaching sinlessness, but lest it should be so understood, the Apostle is careful to guard the reader by saying in advance: "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Sin does not come from God. The spiritual life He puts in us is not sinful, but develops in holy living. We cannot lay our sins on God, for God's seed "cannot sin." The ninth verse, just quoted, is in contrast with eighth, just preceding, which says: "He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." This destruction goes on as the process of sanctification goes on, and the two are completed together (so far as the individual is concerned) when the Christian is taken home to Heaven, to take his place among "the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. They are not "perfect" till they reach Heaven, where they are "without blemish." Rev. xiv. 5.

The Apostle James tells us by inspiration: "In many things we all stumble." iii. 2. That

is to say, nobody walks perfectly, but everybody stumbles. And in verse eight of the same chapter we read, "but the tongue can no man tame;" and therefore no man is free from sins of the tongue. Well may the Psalmist say (Ps. cxix. 96): "I have seen an end of all perfection. But thy commandment is exceedingly broad." And the great Apostle answers the Psalmist across the centuries: "I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before; I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

SOME MISTAKES.

There are several mistakes made by those who hold to sinless perfection in this life:

First—Some mistake regeneration for sanctification. They have been unconverted church members, and have had no relish for holy things. When they are led to faith in Christ and find peace and joy, they think they are sanctified, when the fact is they are simply converted.

Second—Some mistake assurance for sanctification. They have been regenerated for

years, but have been in doubt and under clouds. Coming into the light and being assured of their acceptance with God, they have joy and hope, and they fancy they are now sanctified.

Third—The baptism of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in the New Testament, is supposed to mean sanctification. Let it be remembered that Peter had the baptism of the Holy Spirit twice, at Pentecost and afterward in Cæsarea, and yet after that he sinned grievously at Antioch. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was miraculous, and was always accompanied by miraculous gifts, such as speaking with tongues. There is no reason to believe anybody has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit since the canon of Scripture was closed.

Fourth—Some think the law of God is graded in obligation to man's ability, and if a man begins, after a life of sin, to "do the best he can," that meets the full measure of his duty. "He who measures by inches, for feet, can measure up well."

Fifth—Some regard as sin only voluntary acts, whereas the sinful nature is the fountain and source of all such acts. Stripping off the leaves of the upas tree does not answer.

Sixth—There are those who mistake the power of the human will, and fancy that an act of will can free a man from sin.

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE.

The profession of sinlessness is inconsistent with its profession. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." If a sinless man should appear on earth, he would never make public profession of sinlessness. The more a man grows in grace the humbler he becomes. This is well illustrated in the case of the Apostle Paul. In the year 57, he writes to the Corinthians (I. Cor. xv. 9): "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

Five years later, after he had attained five years more of growth in grace, he writes to the Ephesians (Eph. iii. 8): "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And after still another five years' growth in grace, when he is near the close of his ministry, this same Apostle writes to Timothy (I. Tim. i. 15): "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief."

Thus the better he became, the less profession he made. At first he was "not meet to

be called an apostle"—unworthy to wear the name of an Apostle. Then after becoming a much better man, he says that he is "less than the least of all saints"—the poorest Christian of them all, hardly worthy to be counted as a Christian at all. And, finally, when he had grown still farther in grace, he calls himself the chief of sinners. The better he became, the less he professed. We can mark his progress in holiness by these stages: "not meet to be called an Apostle;" "less than the least of all saints," and chief of sinners. Those who make profession of sinless perfection haven't got the same sort of religion Paul had. As we grow in grace our spiritual vision gets clearer, and we can see stains where we did not see them before.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS.

No one has any ground for boasting. The best man has nothing he did not receive. Our salvation, from beginning to end, is all of grace. Christians are not like the little girl, of whom the Rev. Archibald G. Brown tells. She said: "God made me so big"—holding her hands about a foot apart—"and I grewed the rest myself." Our spiritual growth, as well as our spiritual birth, is all of grace. And this makes

it all the more incumbent upon us to be faithful. That we have wasted some talents is an added reason for making the most of what remains. That we are imperfect should make us the readier to give ourselves wholly to Christ. It is a poor gift at the best—all the more we should make Him welcome to it. We can surrender ourselves, imperfect as we are to God. Poor as are our powers, we can consecrate them to His service. If we are insulated from the world—like the electric wire—we can bear light, heat and power to mankind. As a sinner should come, just as he is, to Christ, so we should consecrate ourselves, just as we are, to Him. Grieved that the best we can offer is so poor, let us all the more heartily devote it to Him.

“Were all the realm of nature mine
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

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