

## *Progressive Sanctification*

Having recently published works on progressive sanctification, and seeing it is still such a hot potato, I was delighted to see how Berridge dealt with this vital topic. Before I quote him, let me remind you that in the Introduction you will find an explanation of my interpolations. In this chapter, when Berridge speaks of ‘sanctification’, he is referring to that aspect of sanctification commonly known as ‘progressive sanctification’ – the believer’s growth in grace and Christ-likeness. Furthermore, when he rightly links this progressive sanctification with the believer’s justification, I would extend this to the believer’s positional sanctification in Christ at the point of faith.

I begin by looking, not at Berridge’s letters, but his books.

When dealing with the issue of progressive sanctification, Berridge started with the futility of cobbling together the two covenants – that is, the old and the new<sup>1</sup> – and arguing that while the believer is not justified by the law of Moses, even so he is under that law (or, the ten commandments, the so-called ‘moral law’) which acts like a whip to drive him to progressive sanctification. This is frequently claimed, and it is quite wrong.<sup>2</sup> And Berridge said so – in his own striking way:

This [new] covenant is too glorious for nature to behold; she shrinks from the dazzling sight, fears woeful consequences from it, and, trembling for morality, beseeches the vicar to marry Moses unto Jesus, and couple the two covenants. From this adulterous alliance springs the spurious covenant of faith and works, with a

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformed mistakenly argue for the oneness of these two covenants.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Christ*.

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spruce new set of duties, half a yard long, called legally evangelical, or evangelically legal, unknown to Christ and his apostles, but discovered lately by some ingenious gentlemen.<sup>3</sup> However, Jesus does not thank [the] old [heart]<sup>4</sup> for her fears. He has promised in his covenant to provide a new heart, and good feet, as well as justification and pardon; and what he promises he will perform. Jesus does not want [need] the staff of Moses; nor will the master of the house suffer [tolerate] an alliance with his servant... Now the blessings of this [new] covenant were all purchased by Jesus, and are lodged in his hand to dispose of – free pardons to bless a guilty sinner, free grace to sanctify his [heart],<sup>5</sup> with full power to lead him safe to Canaan... For a century past the noble building of God's grace has been shored up with legal buttresses: Moses is called in hastily to underprop his master, Jesus.

Berridge asked what the effect of this is. Does preaching the law of Moses or man-made rule produce godliness? It does not! As Paul told the Colossians:

You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands [that is, the law – DG]. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

That is what Christ has accomplished and what every believer profits from in Christ. Now for the relevant consequence:

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<sup>3</sup> John Calvin and his followers, especially the Puritans, all depending on Thomas Aquinas. It is still going on to this very day.

<sup>4</sup> Berridge had 'nature'. I do not agree with 'two nature' teaching. Berridge was speaking of the unregenerate man, the unregenerate heart, the disposition, attitude, mind and will of the carnal man.

<sup>5</sup> See the previous note.

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Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ... If [since] with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations: ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’ (referring to things that all perish as they are used) – according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh (Col. 2:13-23).<sup>6</sup>

There is only one way for the believer to reach the essential end of progressive sanctification. Berridge set out what he saw as the right way:

Everyone who is born of God is made to hunger for implanted holiness, as well as thirst for imputed righteousness. They want a *meetness* for glory, as well as *title* to it, and they know they could not bear to live with God, unless renewed in his image. Heaven would not suit them without holiness, nor could they see the face of God without it.

I think – think – Berridge was saying that while the believer has Christ’s imputed righteousness, he now longs to be holy in his life and experience. Excellent. Nevertheless, the way he expressed himself is confused. The believer is not seeking imputed righteousness, thirsting for imputed righteousness; he already has Christ’s righteousness imputed to him by reason of his union with Christ which brings him immediate and full justification and positional sanctification. Incidentally, no unbeliever is seeking imputed righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

But now Berridge got it spot-on, and was clarity itself:

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<sup>6</sup> None of this obviates the fact that the believer is under the law of Christ, which includes Scripture. See below and my *Believers*.

<sup>7</sup> See the chapter: ‘To an Enquirer’.

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Where imputed righteousness is... received by the Spirit's application, it produces love to Jesus, tender love with gratitude. And this divine love not only makes us willing to obey him, but makes us like him; for God is love. Christian holiness springing from the application of imputed righteousness is a glorious work indeed, far exceeding moral decency, its thin shadow and its dusky image. It is true devotedness of heart to God, a seeking of his glory, walking in his fear<sup>8</sup> and love, rejoicing in him as a reconciled Father, and [being] delighted with his service as the only freedom. Full provision is made for this holiness in the new covenant, and Jesus the noble King of Israel bestows it upon his subjects.<sup>9</sup>

First class! And it exactly squares with the way Paul immediately follows the negative with the positive in his letter to the Colossians. Having got rid of the negative – attempted progressive sanctification by obedience to human regulation, to mere external rules – the apostle then moves to the positive:

If [since] then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self,

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<sup>8</sup> There is a wrong 'fear' – as produced by Calvin's whip, for instance. There is a right 'fear of God', associated, as here, with 'love'. The two 'fears' are the proverbial chalk and cheese.

<sup>9</sup> Berridge: *Unmasked* pp291-292,295-296,337-338, emphasis his.

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which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:1-11).

In other words, the believer, by the Spirit, has a duty to obey the law of Christ in Scripture, all the while looking to Christ. And so on to the end of the letter. This is the apostolic way of progressive sanctification.

And not only that. One of the glorious provisions of the new covenant is that Christ not only bestows his Spirit on every believer to indwell him, but the indwelling Spirit rules and moves the saint to love apostolic teaching and obey apostolic commands, and thus be progressively sanctified (Rom. 6:14-23; 7:4-6; 8:1-4, for instance). To use the technical terms, progressive sanctification is not monergistic but synergistic. Monergistic sanctification states that the believer's progressive sanctification is the work of God through the Holy Spirit alone, as opposed to synergistic sanctification, which argues that the human will cooperates with the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> As Paul puts it, addressing the Philippians:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

Berridge composed a hymn on the glorious theme:

*A sinner's claim to heavenly bliss  
Rests on the Lord's own righteousness;  
Our legal debts he came to clear,  
And make a title full and fair.*

*Yet holiness the heart must grace,  
A meetness for his dwelling-place;  
No filthy souls in heav'n appear;  
They cannot breathe in holy air.*

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<sup>10</sup> See below and my *Believers*.

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*The faith that feels the Saviour's blood,  
And finds in Christ a title good,  
Rebellious lusts will conquer too,  
And build the soul divinely new.*

*And where no work of grace is wrought,  
Nor holiness with hunger sought,  
Such barren souls for all their boast,  
Are sinners dead, and sinners lost.*

*May Jesus' grace to me convey  
Much pow'r to watch, and will to pray,  
Much seeking of the things above,  
Much store of faith, and fruits of love.*

*More broken-hearted let me be,  
And more devoted unto thee;  
More sweet communion with thee find,  
And more of all thy heavenly mind.<sup>11</sup>*

And another:

*The sinner's Friend a Surety stands,  
Pays legal debts with his own hands,  
And pays them all for me;  
He perfect lives, and painful dies,  
And law and justice satisfies,  
Not for himself, but me.<sup>12</sup>*

*By Christ's obedience fully paid,  
A soul in law is righteous made;  
For what can justice say?  
When every debt is well discharg'd,  
The debtor sure must be enlarg'd,  
And sing and march away.*

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<sup>11</sup> See my *Hymns* number 44, taken from Berridge: *Sion's Songs*.

<sup>12</sup> Berridge had 'but thee'.

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*Yet also Jesus, by his grace,  
Gives meetness for his dwelling place,  
And sanctifies the heart;  
His peace creates the tempers<sup>13</sup> kind;  
And love, to all good works inclin'd,  
Fills up the Christian part.*

*Then let my Lord impute to me  
His own obedience full and free,  
As title to his bliss;  
And let his Spirit too implant  
All Christian graces that we want,  
As pledge of happiness.<sup>14</sup>*

As Berridge said elsewhere:

For Christ comes not with pardon alone... but he brings  
also a spirit of life and power.<sup>15</sup>

Berridge, of course, understood the need for the written  
word alongside the inner witness of the Spirit:

The apostles also give many rules to direct the walk of  
faith, and often couple faith with love or obedience.<sup>16</sup>

So they do! In other words, as I explained above,  
progressive sanctification is synergistic. The believer has  
the responsibility, duty and privilege of obeying God's  
word, and the Spirit moves him to love this obedience,  
and gives him the grace to produce it.<sup>17</sup>

Two more of Berridge's hymns on progressive  
sanctification:

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<sup>13</sup> 'Temper', as in disposition, attitude, frame of mind.

<sup>14</sup> My *Hymns* number 45; Berridge: *Sion's Songs*.

<sup>15</sup> Berridge: *Observations* p161.

<sup>16</sup> Berridge: *Unmasked* p307. Oddly, in light of the above,  
Berridge still thought 'Jesus Christ explained the moral law...  
for a rule of life to believers... It becomes a rule of life in the  
Mediator's hand', and he was using 'the moral law' in the usual  
Reformed sense (Berridge: *Unmasked* pp306,336-337). See  
also Berridge: *Outlines* pp134-135; *Observations* p182.

<sup>17</sup> See my *Believers*.

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*Does conscience lay a guilty charge,  
And Moses much condemn,  
And bring in bills exceeding large?  
Let Jesus answer them.*

*He paid thy ransom with his hand,  
And every score<sup>18</sup> did quit;  
And Moses never can demand  
Two payments of one debt.*

*Now justice smiles on mercy sweet,  
And looks well reconciled,  
Joined hand in hand they go to meet  
And kiss a weeping child.*

*But ask the Lord for his receipt,  
To show the payment good,  
Delivered<sup>19</sup> from the mercy seat,  
And sprinkled with his blood.*

*The law will not thy feet enlarge,  
Nor give thy conscience rest,  
'Til thou canst find a full discharge  
Locked up within thy breast.*

*The sight of this will melt thine heart,  
And make thy eyes run o'er;  
A happy pardoned child thou art,  
And heaven is at thy door.<sup>20</sup>*

And another:

*The law demands a weighty debt,  
And not a single mite will bate:  
But gospel sings of Jesus' blood,  
And says it made the payment good.*

*The law provokes men oft to ill,  
And churlish hearts makes harder still;  
But gospel acts a kindly part,  
And melts a most obdurate heart.*

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<sup>18</sup> That is, 'charge'.

<sup>19</sup> That is, 'handed down'.

<sup>20</sup> See my *Hymns* number 58; Berridge: *Sion's Songs*.



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*Run, run,<sup>21</sup> and work, the law commands,  
Yet finds me neither feet nor hands;  
But sweeter news the gospel brings;  
It bids me fly, and lends me wings.*

*Such needful wings, O Lord, impart,  
To brace my feet and brace my heart;  
Good wings of faith and wings of love  
Will make a cripple sprightly move.*

*With these a lumpish soul may fly,  
And soar aloft, and reach the sky;  
Nor faint nor falter in the race,  
But cheerly work, and sing of grace.<sup>22</sup>*

I now turn to the letter Berridge wrote to John Thornton on August 18th 1773. In the course of his letter, Berridge addressed the subject of progressive sanctification. He opened the subject thus:

I trust the Lord has taught me to hate sin, and to hunger after righteousness, yet I am often seeking after holiness in such a manner as stiffens my heart, brings a dry and lean soul, and makes my eyes lose the sight of Christ's salvation. This convinces me there is a mystery in the manner of obtaining [progressive] sanctification that we are not soon acquainted with. We are apt to consider [progressive] sanctification as a separate work from justification, following after it, and wholly independent of it, whereas they seem to be connected works, and inseparable from each other, one resulting from the other.

I pause. Berridge was clearly speaking from his heart and experience – not only during his unregenerate days, but even now that he was converted. Furthermore, he was speaking scripturally, hitting the nail right on its head:

The clearer sight we get of Christ, and the sweeter views we have of our adoption, the more our hearts are filled with love, joy, peace, and all the fruits of the

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<sup>21</sup> Berridge had 'Run, John,'.

<sup>22</sup> My *Hymns* number 59.

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Spirit, which is [progressive] sanctification. When Jesus gives a clearer view of his dying love, he always accompanies that view with the graces of the Spirit. The heart is filled at the same time with pardon and holiness, with justification and sanctification, so that if we desire to be holy, we must seek to be happy in the Saviour's love, must seek a clear evidence of our adoption,<sup>23</sup> and labour to keep it clear. As our views of Christ are more cloudy and discouraging, our bosoms will be more barren of heavenly [influences or feelings].

Berridge then dealt with a common mistake. Many confuse natural ('constitutional' was his word) 'pleasant' characteristics with progressive sanctification. Not so, said Berridge:

A man may be constitutionally meek as the lamb, constitutionally kind as the spaniel, constitutionally cheerful as the lark, and constitutionally modest as the owl, but these are not [progressive] sanctification.

So what, where – who! – is the source of the believer's progressive sanctification? Berridge:

No sweet, humble, heavenly [influences or feelings], no sanctifying graces are found but from the cross. Jesus says: 'He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has (or possesses) eternal life' [John 6:54]. [Here Jesus] shows how eternal life (which must comprise the whole of spiritual life) is obtained; namely, by eating his flesh and drinking his blood – that is, by feeding on his atonement. Thus all divine life, and all the precious fruits of it – pardon, peace and holiness – spring from the cross... Get holiness by clear views of the cross, and find eternal life by feeding on the Saviour's flesh and blood. Was not a lamb sacrificed every morning and evening in the Jewish temple? And was not this intended to show us that we must feed on Christ's atonement every day, and derive all our life, the life of peace and holiness, from his death?

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<sup>23</sup> In the context, I interpret this to mean that we should cultivate the sense of our adoption in Christ. This is right.

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Berridge then showed his pastoral heart and skill:

Upright people are often coming to me with complaints, and telling me that since they received pardon, and have been seeking after [progressive] sanctification (as a separate work) their hearts are become exceeding dry and barren. I ask them how they find their heart when Jesus shows his dying love. They tell me, full of peace, and love, and every heavenly [influence or feeling]. Then I answer, Jesus hereby shows you that holiness as well as pardon is to be had from the blood of the cross.

Berridge went on:

Labour therefore to get your conscience sprinkled every day with the atoning blood, and [progressive] sanctification will ensue of course... When Jesus only gives a smile, and seals some promise on the heart, though it be not the seal of pardon, it occasions a sweet transforming change in the soul.

He then issued a warning:

And all fancied [progressive] sanctification, which does not arise wholly from the blood of the cross, is nothing better than Pharisaism, and if persisted in, will end in Pharisaism. For when [progressive] sanctification is considered as a separate work from justification, and wholly independent of it, by and by it is considered as a justifying work itself, and men profess and preach they are first to be justified by the blood of Christ, and then by their own obedience.

As Berridge so rightly said, getting this wrong – taking our eye off Christ alone – will not lead to progressive sanctification, but produces legalism. Berridge himself, of course, in his unregenerate days, had long laboured under such a delusion and preached it for justification. No more! Nor did he preach it for progressive sanctification. As he said, once again clearly speaking from his heart:

Oh... if we would be holy, we must get to the cross, and dwell there; else notwithstanding all our labour and diligence, and fasting and praying, and good works, we shall be yet void of real [progressive] sanctification,

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destitute of those humble, sweet, and gracious [influences or feelings] which accompany a clear view of the cross.

Berridge had another warning:

But mere doctrinal knowledge will not give us this view; it only proceeds from a lively faith wrought in us by the Prince of life. A legal spirit helps forward our mistake in the matter of [progressive] sanctification. We would fain... separate [progressive] sanctification from justification, that we may make merit of it, as the Foundry people do.<sup>24</sup> Whereas, if they are inseparably connected, and both pardon and holiness spring from the blood of the cross, the root of merit is dug up thereby, and Christ is all in all.

And that is not all:

Another thing confirms our mistake, which is that all heavenly graces are called fruits of the Spirit. Hence we conclude that pardon must spring peculiarly from the blood of the cross, and holiness be a separate work of the Spirit. But though all gracious [influences or feelings] are the Spirit's fruits, yet that fruit is bestowed at the foot of the cross – eternal life is found at Calvary by eating the Saviour's flesh and drinking his blood.

As he drew to the close of his letter, Berridge expressed his prayerful desire for his reader and family:

May the Lord Jesus bring and keep you and yours at the cross, to see and sing the wonders of redeeming love, till you are called up higher to sing eternal praise with all the saints.<sup>25</sup>

And may God grant that this shall be the effect of these extracts on all who read them.

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<sup>24</sup> Berridge was referring to those who met at the Old Foundry, Moorfields, which was the headquarters of John Wesley's work.

<sup>25</sup> Pibworth: *Letters* pp197-201.

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Let me quote two hymns to emphasise the excellent point Berridge was making. The first is by Fanny Crosby:

*Jesus, keep me near the cross;  
There a precious fountain,  
Free to all, a healing stream,  
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.*

Refrain:

*In the cross, in the cross  
Be my glory ever,  
Till my raptured soul shall find  
Rest beyond the river.*

*Near the cross, a trembling soul,  
Love and mercy found me;  
There the bright and morning Star  
Shed His beams around me.*

*Near the cross! O Lamb of God,  
Bring its scenes before me;  
Help me walk from day to day  
With its shadow o'er me.*

*Near the cross I'll watch and wait,  
Hoping, trusting ever;  
Till I reach the golden strand,  
Just beyond the river.*

And the second by James Allen:

*Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the cross we spend.  
Life and health and peace possessing  
From the sinner's dying Friend.*

*Here we rest in wonder, viewing  
All our sins on Jesus laid;  
Here we see redemption flowing  
From the sacrifice he made.*

*Here we find the dawn of heaven  
While upon the cross we gaze,  
See our trespasses forgiven,  
And our songs of triumph raise.*

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*Oh, that, near the cross abiding,  
We may to the Saviour cleave,  
Nought with him our hearts dividing,  
All for him content to leave!*

*Lord, in loving contemplation  
Fix our hearts and eyes on thee  
Till we taste thy full salvation  
And thine unveiled glory see.*

A few months later, on 14th January 1774, Berridge wrote to John Thornton again, and raised the same subject:

Now, when Jesus opens a sinner's eyes, to behold the multiplied guilt of his ignorance, unrighteous conduct, and unholy heart, and of his lying under a law curse thereby, he quickly flies to the Surety for relief. And when by faith he is enabled to view a finished salvation, and steadfastly to rely upon the Surety, redemption is found; he feels the sprinkled blood, the love of God is poured into his heart, which hallows it, making self-denial an easy yoke and obedience a cheerful service.

Even though I have already commented on this letter,<sup>26</sup> I take the liberty of repeating the relevant remarks here: What a vital truth! Berridge was now speaking of the believer's progressive sanctification, and showing how this is accomplished as he looks to Christ and his grace to him. In other words, not only is the sinner converted by looking to the crucified Christ, but by the same means the converted sinner – now a saint – is progressively sanctified. And, it surely goes without saying, the believer does not keep his eye on Christ as a mere spectator, but as one who has a personal and felt interest in Christ and what he has done for, in and to him. As the apostle declared:

Through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now

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<sup>26</sup> See the chapter: 'Positional Sanctification'.

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live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:19-20).

In other words, the believer's progressive sanctification is brought about as he keeps his mind on his positional sanctification and justification in Christ (Col. 3:1-11). And, as Berridge said, this looking to Christ by the believer is not a one-off:

And while believers keep simply looking to a crucified Christ, and the eye of faith is kept open, love and peace flow on sweetly like a river, and the heart becomes more lowly, more childlike, and more devoted unto God. By feeding *only* and daily on the flesh and blood of Christ eternal life springs up in them as a well of water.<sup>27</sup>

Excellent! As the sinner trusts Christ and his grace, he is saved – justified and positionally sanctified – and as the believer keeps his eye on Christ and his grace, so he is progressively sanctified.

In a letter to John Thornton 17th November 1784, Berridge spoke of the believer's folly – and worse – of attempting to grow in practical holiness without keeping his eye on Christ, for both motive and power. This letter, too, I have already quoted, but it bears repeating:

When grace enters a bosom, Jesus becomes the darling of the heart, the joy and trust of it, and all obedience without this only nourishes self-righteousness and self-applause, and will end in shame and woeful disappointment... When Christ becomes a sinner's chief joy, self is felt the chief of sinners... This is regeneration, the new heart that makes a child of God; and without this, all convictions of sin and present reformation will come to nothing.<sup>28</sup>

Excellent!

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<sup>27</sup> Pibworth: *Letters* p223, emphasis original.

<sup>28</sup> Pibworth: *Letters* pp335-336.

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On 16th April 1777, Berridge wrote a letter to ‘a fellow-preacher’, in which he packed a handful of gems into a tiny packet:

Has not Christ made full atonement for all believers’ sins – past, present and to come? If he has made complete atonement, we may still go [to him?] with a blush – indeed, a confident blush – for pardon, notwithstanding [our] repeated and aggravated provocations. And we shall dishonour Christ, and wrong our own soul, if we go not. But suppose, through unbelief and fear, we dare not venture to go. Can this mend the matter? Will it not rather beget grudgings against God as an austere Master, and stir up enmity against him as a consuming fire?

Berridge then moved to progressive sanctification, and raised an issue which is with us to this very day: to bring the believer to practical holiness, do we preach law, whip and rule, with fear of punishment, or do we preach loving obedience to Christ on the basis of our position in Christ? Many, alas, choose the former. Berridge set out the truth by a series of questions:

Which is most apt to kindle repentance, shame, love and kindly obedience? Is it a dread of invincible wrath, or an assurance of pardon through the riches of divine grace?

Clearly, Berridge knew it was the latter.

He then gave his experience:

This morning I had a sweet view, in the Spirit’s light, of believing in Christ for righteousness, not only without – but against – all comfortable feeling, and clearly saw that it was not apt to stifle repentance of sin and harden the conscience, but to melt the heart of a pilgrim, and quicken his feet, and furnish his mouth with praise. And though graceless souls... will convert all meat into poison, yet a gracious heart must be fed with the food of grace notwithstanding.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Pibworth: *Letters* pp265-266.



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I spoke of a handful of gems in this letter. Here they are: Berridge's pastoral concern and sound counsel for anxious believers; the way that the preaching of Christ and free grace, and looking to Christ and free grace, produces spirituality; the tendency of the natural man to abuse free grace. May I not accommodate the words of Winston Churchill: 'Rarely can so much have been packed into so few words'.<sup>30</sup>

I now turn to an undated letter Berridge wrote to an unnamed man, probably a fellow-preacher of the gospel, in which he put his finger right on the spot: Christ not only justifies, but he sanctifies – both positionally and progressively. Berridge put it in the personal, speaking of himself – but, of course, he was speaking for every believer:

I truly need a physician within as well as without: Christ and his blood and righteousness to justify and acquit, and the blessed Spirit to [progressively] sanctify and cure the inward diseases of my soul. For what would it avail a condemned malefactor to be pardoned and acquitted of his crimes, if he had the jail distemper [fever] upon him [still],<sup>31</sup> and was to die by it? Indeed, God never justifies but he sanctifies [both positionally and progressively – here the latter is Berridge's point]. Election is God's [secret] mark to know his children by. Calling and [progressive] sanctification are our marks, by which we come to know that we ourselves are his elected children.

I pause. In part, Berridge got this wrong. The believer's personal assurance stems first from the witness of the Spirit, supported by progressive sanctification; not the other way round. On the other hand, other believers can

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<sup>30</sup> In a speech on 20th August 1940, speaking of the part played by the fighter pilots in the Battle of Britain, Churchill declared: 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'.

<sup>31</sup> In other words, he was still going on in the same old way, still not cured of his addiction to sin.

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only know that someone else is elect by observing their progressive sanctification. These two aspects of assurance are distinct, and that distinction must be maintained. Many get this wrong, and suffer much anxiety because of it.<sup>32</sup>

Berridge went on, advising his fellow-preacher how to address believers with the gospel – yes, how to address *believers* with the gospel:

Oh then set forth the work of the Spirit in a rebellious will, a blind understanding, a hard heart, a stupid conscience and vile affections.

Alas, in saying this, Berridge painted too gloomy a picture. While the believer is far from perfect in himself, to describe him as ‘rebellious, blind, hard, stupid and vile’ is going too far.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, as he continued, Berridge was right to speak of his – and every believer’s – need of:

...the work of the Spirit... renewing and sanctifying all these powers, and so proving it [that is, professed conversion] to be truly the work of God and not of man. This gospel sanctification I need and earnestly desire.<sup>34</sup>

But, of course, it’s not just that the believer needs the Spirit for all this. Every believer has the Spirit, given to him by Christ at the point of conversion, and given to him for this very purpose.<sup>35</sup>

I opened this chapter by saying that progressive sanctification is still a hot potato. In my view, Berridge’s words need serious consideration by believers today.

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<sup>32</sup> See my *Assurance*.

<sup>33</sup> Contrary to many, Rom. 7:14-25 does not justify it, as I noted earlier.

<sup>34</sup> Pibworth: *Letters* p422.

<sup>35</sup> See my *Fivefold*; *Positional*.