

## The Christian Life (17): Sanctification (Part 2)

Having distinguished between definitive (initial) and progressive (ongoing) sanctification, we want to consider its importance. Simply put, sanctification (holiness) isn't an option for Christians, but is an absolute necessity.

Sanctification is absolutely *necessary*. It is necessary for many things; it is necessary to the saints, as an evidence of their election and redemption; this is the closing work of grace and is the evidence of all that goes before. It is necessary to church-fellowship, to the communion of saints in a social manner. Members of churches are described as holy brethren, saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus, and none are meet to be admitted among them but such who are so; *for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?* Sanctification is necessary as a meetness for heaven; for the inheritance of the saints in light; without regeneration, in which sanctification is begun, no man shall see, nor enter into the kingdom of beatific-vision of God in a future state; *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; but being possessed of that, shall see Him, and enjoy uninterrupted communion with Him forever. To say no more, it is necessary for the work of heaven, which is singing songs of praise, songs of electing, redeeming, regenerating, calling, and persevering grace; how can unholy persons join with the saints in such work and service as this? Yea, it would be irksome and disagreeable to themselves, could they be admitted to it, and were capable of it; neither of which can be allowed.<sup>1</sup>

### I. Sanctification: Its Necessity

1. *It's necessary for entrance into heaven.* While no man enters heaven because of his holiness, no man enters heaven without it. "They are much mistaken in the Lord Christ, who hope to see Him hereafter in glory, and live and die here in an unholy state" (Owen).<sup>2</sup> "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb.12:14). "The 'holiness' referred to in this text is not imputed holiness, for we cannot be exhorted to 'follow after' that! No, it is personal and practical holiness, which is not attained by standing still, but by an earnest, diligent, persistent pursuit after the same" (Pink).<sup>3</sup> And so, while the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone gives us a right to heaven, the impartation of holiness gives us a heart for heaven. "Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness. What would you do? What possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their pleasures are not your pleasures, their tastes not your tastes, their character not your character. How could you possibly be happy if you had not been holy on earth" (Ryle).<sup>4</sup> There is a sense in which the holiness we shall enjoy perfectly in heaven, is begun in a small measure now on earth. It's for this reason, our present holiness is called "glory" (2Cor.3:18), as there is a necessary connection between our future glorification and our present sanctification. The latter (sanctification) is the beginning of the former (glorification). "True holiness is the first-fruits of heaven. Within it there is a ray of eternal light, a principle of eternal life, and the entire nature of that love whereby we shall eternally adhere unto God. It represents unto God the glory of His own image renewed in us; and unto the Lord Christ the fruits of His Spirit and ef-

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<sup>1</sup> John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 559

<sup>2</sup> John Owen, *Hebrews*, 7:287-288

<sup>3</sup> A.W. Pink, *Hebrews*,

<sup>4</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 42-43

fect of His mediation, wherein He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied" (Owen).<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt.5:8). "Without holiness on earth, none of the sons of men shall ever come to a blessed vision and fruition of God in heaven" (Brooks).<sup>6</sup> "He who is unjust let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev.22:11). As we die, so shall we eternally be.

Thus the way or path to heaven is described as narrow and difficult. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt.7:13-14). Every person is presently on one of two paths. The first is broad and leads to death the second is difficult and leads to life. Only those on the difficult path (it's difficult because it runs contrary to the world) enter eternal life. "Unless we are made partakers of the Divine nature, unless there be personal devotedness to God, unless there be an earnest striving after conformity to His will, then Heaven will never be reached. There is only one route which leads to the Country of everlasting bliss, and that is the Highway of Holiness; and unless (by grace) we tread the same, our course must inevitably terminate in the caverns of eternal woe" (Pink).<sup>7</sup> "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others" (Isa.35:8). This "Highway of Holiness" is one and the same as the narrow gate that results in a difficult way that leads to life. "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord come" (1Cor.16:22)! As heaven is a world of love, no one enters it without love for Christ. This is why death brings gain for the believer. Because it brings us to Him whom we loved on earth. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). Death is only gain for those who loved Christ and lived for him. For all else, death brings eternal loss as it separates them from all they lived for (the fleeting and passing pleasures of sin). "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Rev.22:14-15).

Heaven is the house of God's holiness, and therefore certainly without holiness there is no entering into that house (Rev.21:27). The Holy of Holies in the temple was a type of heaven. And as none might enter into the Holy of Holies that were unholy, so none can enter into heaven, which is the true holy of holies, but those that are holy. Heaven was so holy, that it cast out the angels when they fell from their holiness. Paradise was a type of heaven, and no sooner did Adam lose his holiness, but he was shut out of paradise. Heaven is a city of holiness: and none can enter into that city but such as are holy. Heaven is so holy that it would groan to bear one unholy soul. Well, heaven is a holy place, and the inhabitants are all holy, and the work of heaven is holy; and what then should unholy souls do there?<sup>8</sup>

2. *It's necessary for fellowship with God.* No person can have fellowship with God in an unholy state. "Without a principle of purity, of sanctity, there is no vision of God in glory. If a man be never so poor, yet if his heart be pure, God will make a house of his heart, wherein His honor will delight to dwell; let a man's outside be never so homely, yet if his inside be but cleanly, God will make it His own habitation.

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<sup>5</sup> John Owen, *Works*, 3:376

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Works*, 4:46

<sup>7</sup> A.W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*,31

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Works*, 4:78

God is for that man, and that man is for God, that carries about with him a pure heart. Heart-purity makes a man a darling of heaven" (Brooks).<sup>9</sup> "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exists,' says the LORD. 'But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word'" (Isa.66:1-2). "LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart" (Ps.15:1). "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed" (Amos 3:3)? "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has this temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2Cor.6:14-18).

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1Jn.1:6-7). Those who "walk in the light" have fellowship both with God and the saints. True spiritual or religious fellowship is always "in the light" or holiness. "It is a principle of holiness that fits a man for the service of God, that fits a man for fellowship with God, that fits a man for walking with God, that fits a man for correspondency with God, and that fits a man for the delight of God, and that fits a man for an everlasting fruition of God. And therefore certainly without holiness there is no happiness; without a principle of purity there can be no fellowship with God" (Brooks).<sup>10</sup>

If we had no other argument to prove the necessity of holiness, and that it is indispensably required of us, but only this, that the God whom we serve and worship is absolutely holy, that His being and nature is such as that He can have no delightful intercourse with any that are unholy, it were abundantly sufficient unto our purpose. He who resolves not to be holy had best seek another god to worship and serve; with our God he will never find acceptance. And therefore the heathen, who gave up themselves unto all filthiness with delight and greediness, to stifle the notions of a divine Being, that they might not control them in their sins and pleasures, fancied such gods to themselves as were wicked and unclean, that they might freely conform unto them and serve them with satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

Without holiness no man can have any spiritual communion with God in this world; he may hear, but he can have no communion with God in hearing without holiness; he may pray, but he can have no communion with God in prayer without holiness; he may come to the sacrament, but he can have no communion with God in the sacrament without holiness; he may come into the communion of saints, but he can have no communion with God in the communion of saints without holiness; he may read and meditate, but he can have no communion with God in reading and meditation without holiness.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Works*, 4:77-78

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Works*, 4:78

<sup>11</sup> John Owen, *Works*, 3:569

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Works*, 4:54

3. *It's a primary reason for Christ's death.* "We must be holy, because this is one grand end and purpose for which Christ came into the world. To talk of men being saved from the guilt of sin, without being at the same time saved from its dominion in their hearts, is to contradict the witness of all Scripture" (Ryle).<sup>13</sup> "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (Jn.17:17-19). Christ was sanctified (set apart on the cross), for the purpose of sanctifying His people. "Protestantism teaches that no man is delivered from the guilt of sin who is not delivered from its reigning power; that sanctification is inseparable from justification, and that the one is just as essential as the other" (Hodge).<sup>14</sup> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:25-26). "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Tit.2:14). "Sanctification is not an option. It is a necessity. Sanctification, initial and progressive, is a mark of a true Christian. If we are not pursuing holiness in our lives as defined and described by the Bible, we will be lost in the end. We do not earn salvation by sanctification, but salvation is evidenced in us by and through our sanctification. Indeed, sanctification, like justification, is an essential aspect of true salvation. Therefore, where there is no sanctification, there is no salvation" (Johnson).<sup>15</sup> "The salvation which Christ purchased for His people includes both justification and sanctification. The Lord Jesus saves not only from the guilt and penalty of sin, but from the power and pollution of it" (Pink).<sup>16</sup> Christ purchased our sanctification with His blood as much as our justification.

He who supposes that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again only to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for His people, has yet much to learn. Whether he knows it or not, he is dishonoring our blessed Lord and making Him only a half Savior. The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that His people's souls require; not only to deliver them from the guilt of their sins by His atoning death, but from the dominion of their sins, by placing in their hearts the Holy Spirit; not only to justify them, but also to sanctify them. He is, thus, not only their righteousness, but their sanctification... I fear it is sometimes forgotten that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things, beyond question, but one is never found without the other. All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified people are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ's work for you unless you can show us the Spirit's work in you. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can never be divided.<sup>17</sup>

One *principle* end of the design of God in *sending His Son* into the world was to recover us into a *state of holiness*, which he had lost. 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1Jn.3:8). The manifestation of the Son of God was His incarnation (1Tim.3:16), in order to the work which He had to accomplish in our nature; and this was, in general, the destruction of the works of the devil; and among these, the principle was the infecting of our nature and person with a princi-

<sup>13</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 39

<sup>14</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:238

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Johnson, *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith*, 246

<sup>16</sup> A.W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, 30

<sup>17</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 39, 46

ple of sin and enmity against God, which was the effect of his temptation. And this is not done but by the introduction of a principle of holiness and obedience. The image of God in us was defaced by sin. The renovation or restoration hereof was one principle design of Christ in His coming. Unless this be done, there is no new world, no new creatures, no restoration of all things—no one end of the mediation of Christ fully accomplished. And whereas His great and ultimate design was to bring us unto the enjoyment of God, unto His eternal glory, this cannot be before, by grace and holiness, we are 'made meet for that inheritance of the saints in light.'<sup>18</sup>

4. *It's necessary to validate our profession.* Protestant Confessions underscore the necessity for holiness with respect to our assurance. In fact, most Confessions suggest three bases for personal assurance. For example, the Canons of Dort says: "This assurance...(1) springs from faith in God's promises...(2) from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God...and lastly, (3) from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works."<sup>19</sup> The 2LBC says: "This assurance is grounded upon (1) the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel; and also upon (2) the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and (3) on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God."<sup>20</sup> "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1Jn.3:18-19). This is why our final judgment will be based on works. "An hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn.5:28-29). As works are a necessary evidence of faith, so works are a necessary evidence of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith for good works (Eph.2:8-10). "Good works are required not for living according to the law, but because we live by the gospel; not as the causes on account of which life is given to us, but as effects which testify that life has been given to us" (Turretin).<sup>21</sup>

It is by our good works, therefore, that we know that we possess true faith, because the effect is not without its own proper cause, which is always known by its effect; so that if we are destitute of good works and new obedience, we are hypocrites, and have an evil conscience instead of true faith; for true faith (which is never wanting in all the fruits which are peculiar to it) as a fruitful tree produces good works, obedience and repentance; which fruits distinguish true faith from that faith which is merely historical and temporary, as well as from hypocrisy itself.<sup>22</sup>

Good works are necessary to believers for making their calling and election sure to them. Although such works afford a man no right to eternal salvation, yet they are an infallible proof to him that he has a personal interest in it and a sure title to it. They, under the witnessing of the Holy Spirit, supply the believer with arguments, which not only serve to confirm his assurance of faith, but to increase his assurance of personal interest in Christ and His great salvation. 'Hereby we do know that we know Him,' said the beloved disciple, 'if we keep His commandments...Whoever keeps His word, in him

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<sup>18</sup> John Owen, *Works*, 3:628-629

<sup>19</sup> Canons of Dort, 5:10

<sup>20</sup> 2LBC, 18:2

<sup>21</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:705

<sup>22</sup> Zacharius Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 483

verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him' (1Jn.2:3-5). To the same purpose the Apostle Peter says, 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity...Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall' (2Pet.1:5-10). Without the diligent performance of good works, no believer can attain assurance of his personal interest in eternal salvation, far less establishment in that assurance.<sup>23</sup>

5. *It's necessary to fulfill our divine calling.* One reason Christians are left in this world is to glorify God by good works and to adorn the gospel by a life characterized by evangelical holiness. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Eph.4:1). "For this is the will of God, your sanctification...for God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness" (1Thess.4:3,7). "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil.2:14-15). Christ has left a remnant in the world to bear witness to Him and the truth. "We can only bear witness for the Savior as we make His doctrine our rule, His glory our concern, His example our practice. Christ is honored not by wordy expressions, but by a holy conversation. Nothing has done more to bring the gospel of Christ into reproach than the wicked lives of those who hear His name. If I am not living a holy and obedient life this shows that I am not *for* Christ, but *against* Him." (Pink).<sup>24</sup> "Good works are indispensably necessary for promoting before the world the manifested glory of Christ, and of God in Him. Believers then must endeavor, whatever they do, to 'do all to the glory of God' (1Cor.10:31). To this purpose it is necessary that they care for the things of the Lord, 'that they may be holy both in body and spirit, diligently following every good work' (1Cor.7:34), and that they 'follow not that which is evil, but that which is good' (3Jn.1:11)" (Colquhoun).<sup>25</sup>

Without the holiness prescribed in the gospel, we give nothing of that glory unto Jesus Christ which He indispensably requires. And if men will be so foolish as to expect the greatest benefits and advantages by the mediation of Christ—namely, pardon of sin, salvation, life, and immortality—while they neglect and refuse to give Him any revenue of glory for all He has done for them, we may bewail their folly, but cannot prevent their ruin. He saves us freely by His grace; but He requires that we should express a sense of it, in ascribing unto Him the glory that is His due. And let no man think this is done in wordy expressions; it is no otherwise effected but by the power of a holy conversation, 'showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*, 300

<sup>24</sup> A.W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, 39

<sup>25</sup> John Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*, 303

<sup>26</sup> John Owen, *Works*, 3:650