

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION *by Arthur W. Pink*

Chapter 27

The Process of Sanctification (continued-3)

At the beginning of Chapter 25 we pointed out that by the process of sanctification we mean the principal actings of those who have already been manifestatively set apart by God unto Himself and for Himself. It is with the experimental and practical side of the subject that we are now treating, with that which is the sequel to regeneration, namely, God's sustaining and developing the nature or principle communicated at the new birth, and the believer's co-operation with Him therein. In other words, it is the spiritual growth of the babe in Christ we are here concerned with, more especially as that growth follows the twofold process of mortification and vivification--the mortifying of the old nature, and the vivifying of the new.

Having devoted the last two chapters to the former, we now turn to a consideration of the latter.

It has already been pointed out that the two different actings of the Christian in mortification and vivification are not so distinct that the one can go on independently of or at a distinct time from the other, for the one necessarily accompanies the other. Nevertheless, in explaining that twofold process of the believer's experimental sanctification or spiritual growth, they need to be separately expounded. The order in which we should consider them is obvious: we must die to sin (relatively speaking) before we can (in any measure) live to God. The privative must precede the positive: disease must be subdued before health can be enjoyed; the lamp must be cleansed before its light can shine forth clearly; rags must be discarded before new apparel is put on. This order is uniformly insisted on throughout the Scriptures: let the following passages be taken as examples.

"Cease to do evil" comes before "learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16, 17). "Hate the evil, and love the good" (Amos 5:15): the latter is impossible without the former. Self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Matt. 16:24). "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God" (Rom. 6:13). "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them" (2 Cor. 5:15): we have to cease living unto self ere we can live unto Christ; yea, we must be "crucified with Christ" before we can live by faith (Gal. 2:20). The putting off of the old man precedes the putting on of the new (Eph. 4:22-24). We have to be made conformable to Christ's death ere we can attain unto spiritual resurrection (Phil. 3:10, 11). Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts comes before living soberly and righteously (Titus 2:12). Weights must be laid aside before we can run the race set before us (Heb. 12:1).

As the term is used theologically "vivification" means a living unto God. It is not enough that the believer should die unto sin: he must also walk in newness of life. Recess from the world is worthless unless it issues in access to God. Practical holiness consists not so much in a mere abstinence from a sensual life, but principally in living unto God--delighting in Him, desiring after Him, carefulness to please Him, loathness to offend Him. God has imparted grace to the regenerate not simply that they may have it, but that they use the same to His glory: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). The grace God has given His people is to be exercised by them in a course of hearty obedience to Him, according to the directions which He has given in His Word.

God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son: now Christ died unto sin (Rom. 6:10)--so must we; Christ lives unto God--so must we. In mortification there is a likeness unto Christ's death, and in vivification (or living unto God) there is a likeness to His resurrection: the latter is the inseparable adjunct of the former. Christ cannot be divided: those who partake with Him in the one act, partake with Him in the other.

God will not leave His work in us half done: if He makes us to hate and forsake the evil, then He also causes us to love and seek after the good. In Psalm 1 the godly man is not only described as walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, standing not in the way of sinners, and sitting not in the seat of the scornful, but also as delighting in the Law of the Lord, meditating therein day and night, and then bringing forth his fruits in his season. God subdues sin in us to make way for a life of righteousness.

From the experimental side sanctification is the acting out of that holy principle received at the new birth. At regeneration a new nature is bestowed, which re-capacitates the soul Godwards, so that the heart is now inclined toward Him, delights in Him, pants after Him. But let us be more specific, and describe something of this new disposition of mind. First, there is now a holy reverence for God, on account of His Person, His perfections, His works. Of the unsanctified it is said, "there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18); but where a principle of grace and holiness has been infused the fear of God quickly appears, for it is "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). The regenerate man cannot now do the things which he did before, and that others do: "but so did not I, because of the fear of God" (Neh. 5:15).

It is this heart-awe for God, this godly reverence, this filial fear, which is one of the roots from which springs spiritual obedience, for such reverence necessarily yields submission to the revealed will of God. When Israel avowed at Sinai "All that the Lord hath said, we will do," He answered, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deut. 5:29): the fear of God, then, precedes the keeping of His commandments. It is this principle of godly reverence which the Lord is pledged to give unto His people according to the terms of the new covenant: "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever" (Jer. 32:39): that "fear" is the same as the "new spirit" of (Ezek. 11:19), and as the writing of His law on our hearts (Heb. 8:10). This same

spiritual grace is also called fearing "the LORD and (not His "judgments," but) His goodness" (Hosea 3:5).

Second, accompanying this filial awe is a sincere and holy love for God, from which springs acceptable obedience to Him. That love consists in the heart's being drawn out to God and delighting itself in Him. It is a disposition and inclination of soul unto communion with Him, with complacency, so that its language now is "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee" (Psa. 73:25). An unregenerate man cannot love God nor take any delight in His perfections, ways or worship, for "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). The unsanctified desire to depart from Him and dismiss Him from their thoughts. Job says of the hypocrite, "will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" (27:10)--no, he will not. But in regeneration the Lord circumcises the heart, or renews and sanctifies it to love Him with all the soul, and that sincerely and cordially.

Third, vivification manifests itself in a complete submission to the will of God in all things, not only to His perceptive will, but to His disposing will also, even to the most adverse dispensations of providence. Instances of this may be seen in the cases of Aaron, Eli, David, and others, who rebelled not nor murmured, but were quiet and silent, resigned to the Divine will under the most severe rebukes and the most painful trials: see Leviticus 10:3, 1 Samuel 3:18; 2 Samuel 15:25, 26. Much of sanctification lies in the conformity of our wills to the will of God. As the saintly Usher said, "Sanctification is nothing less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love as a whole burnt offering."

Fourth, vivification is expressed by being spiritually minded. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6); that is, the bent and inclination of a renewed mind is unto spiritual things, for it is that whereby we live to God and enjoy peace with Him. By nature we care only for the things of the flesh, minding earthly concerns (Phil. 3:19)--our corrupt hearts

are set upon them, disposed towards them, eager after whatever leads to the enjoyment of them. But the regenerate mind thinks of things above, and in vivification his affections are drawn out after and fixed upon them (Col. 3:3). It was by virtue of this that David declared his soul followed hard after God (Psa. 63:8), or inclined earnestly unto all those ways whereby he might live unto Him, and come unto the enjoyment of him. This same fervour and diligence is seen in the case of the Apostle Paul: Philippians 3:13, 14. None but God can satisfy the sanctified.

Fifth, vivification is seen in religious exercises or acts of devotion to God, particularly in the actings of grace in them. Here too there is a radical difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate: the former engages in religious exercises formally, as a matter of duty--but the latter (when in a healthy state) takes delight therein. The ministry of the Word is attended with affection, and prayer is engaged in with fervour, for prayer is the very breath of a sanctified soul toward God. It is not so much in the outward performance that the believer differs from the unbeliever, as in the holy actings of his heart, such as eager desires after communion with God therein. The sanctified soul cannot be satisfied with using the means of grace unless he meets with God in them. A sanctified soul seeks the glory of God in all that he does.

In whomsoever the new nature or principle of grace is, it disposes the whole soul unto the acts and duties of holiness, and that universally or impartially. There is no duty of holiness but what there is a disposition unto it in the sanctified heart. There is a respect unto all of God's commandments. Some of them may be more contrary unto our natural inclinations than others, some may more cross with our present secular interests, some are attended with more difficulties and disadvantages than others, and some of them may be rendered very dangerous by the peculiar circumstances of particular seasons. Nevertheless, if there be a gracious principle in our hearts, it will equally incline and dispose us to everyone of them in their proper place and time. The reason for this is that the new

nature equally inclines unto all that pertains to it, as all acts of holy obedience do.

Again--the new nature disposes the heart unto duties of holiness constantly and evenly. He in whom the principle of grace resides fears the Lord always, though often the godless flesh gains the upper hand in him. Nevertheless, so far as that new nature itself is concerned, in all instances and on all occasions it equally inclines the mind unto acts of holy obedience. It is true that the actings of grace which proceed from it are in us sometimes more vigorous and intense than at others. It is also true that we are ourselves sometimes more watchful and careful in acting grace, whether in our general course or in solemn duties. There are times when the flesh rages in us, and when Satan opposes more fiercely--when grace is obstructed; but that does not clash with what we first said. That living principle of holiness is like a fountain of water ever springing up (John 4:14), though as its stream passes on in its course, it meets with opposition and hindrance--yet its waters continue to press on.

Once more--the new nature disposes the heart permanently thus. It will never cease inclining the soul unto the duties of holiness until it comes to the end of them all in the final enjoyment of God. This holy principle is an incorruptible seed, abiding in the believer forever, and constantly acts according to its own constitution. True, it is our duty to make use of all the appointed means to preserve and cherish the principle itself and its actings. We are to "show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end" (Heb. 6:11). It is also true that sometimes, and in some persons, upon fierce temptations, with the violence and deceitfulness of lusts, the principle of grace may seem for a season to be utterly stifled, and thus this property of permanency be destroyed--as it appeared to have been the case with David under his sad fall and decay. Yet such is its nature, that it is immortal, everlasting, and shall never absolutely die, which is owing solely to the faithfulness, power and grace of God.

Were we to stop at this point the Christian reader would indeed have occasion to lay down the book in despair, feeling that it has quite cut him off, that he has "neither part nor lot in this matter." Let it be duly pointed out, then, that in the regenerate and sanctified there are yet inclinations and dispositions to sin, proceeding from the contrary principle of the flesh--that vicious, corrupt, depravity of our nature, disposing the soul unto all that is evil. This still continues in us, then, working constantly in varying degrees of power. This it is which occasions such a strange paradox and puzzle to the sincere believer: that in him are such contrary inclinations, opposing one another, acting adversely about the same objects and ends. While sin has received a fatal wound, it is far from being dead, and though the believer be most diligent and faithful in prosecuting the work of mortification, yet the task of vivification will be frequently, yea, hourly, opposed and retarded. The qualities pertaining to the principle of holiness (which we have described) pertain unto itself, but the qualities of sin ever resist them. But to return to our immediate subject.

The thoughtful reader will, no doubt, be ready to ask, If the principle of holiness communicated at regeneration possesses such characteristics as reverence for and love to God, and if it also constantly inclines the soul unto all duties of obedience, then why do we find the Psalmist praying, "unite my heart to fear Thy name" (86:11), and "incline my heart unto Thy testimonies" (119:36)? Do not such petitions seem to contradict our assertions that the new nature itself disposes the heart toward God and is the root from which all acceptable obedience to Him springs? No, but they do show that, notwithstanding the spirituality of the new nature, yet it is entirely dependent on the operations of the Holy Spirit for its actual exercise on all occasions. Only as He strengthens us with might in the inner man, renews us day by day, leads us in the paths of righteousness, are we enabled to render unto God that which He requires. The new nature is what makes the soul meet for good works, but the Spirit must supply the necessary power.

This it is which explains the prayers of the Psalmist. Take, again, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken Thou me in Thy way" (119:37). Note, first, the order is the same here as in all the passages quoted in the third paragraph, mortification preceding vivification. The first clause is an asking God to remove the impediment unto obedience: "vanity" being a general term to include all carnal and worldly things. The second clause is asking God for additional grace, to make our affections lively toward spiritual and heavenly things. "Quicken" is the actuation of the spiritual life, grace to perform all duties with cheerfulness and zeal. Our original quickening was at regeneration (Eph. 2:1), when grace or spiritual life was first infused; but we stand in need, constantly, of further renewing, so that the life of grace may be invigorated--just as a person, even a healthy one, requires to have his physical strength renewed each day.

The nature of this need for renewal may be summed in two words: comfort, and enlivening. By nature our hearts are prone to sink when trouble comes upon us: unless grace be renewed in our hearts, the soul faints. When left to ourselves, we become so occupied with our trials, and so distrustful of God to undertake for us, that we are overwhelmed, so as to have no spirit or courage left. Then it is that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: "This is My comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me" (Psa. 119:50)--God has raised up the heart above the trouble, increasing faith and strengthening patience. Again: by nature we are slothful unto the performance of all duties of holiness, and when left to ourselves a spirit of lethargy seizes us, creeping over the soul until its faculties are paralyzed unto all spiritual endeavour. It is then that the Spirit helps our infirmities by re-animating us, calling into exercise the new nature.

When the believer grows slack in using the appointed means of grace, or is slothful in pursuing the business of the spiritual life deadness soon falls upon the soul. A key never turned will rust in the lock, and grace not used quickly becomes lukewarm: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this

life" (Luke 21:34). Such "quickenning" of the believer, then, is absolutely essential for his well-being. Without it he cannot pray with any spiritual vigour: "Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name" (Psa. 80:18). Without it he cannot hear the Word to profit: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing" (Matt. 13:15); "I have longed after Thy precepts: quicken me in Thy righteousness" (Psa. 119:40). Without it he cannot obey: "quicken me after Thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth" (Psa. 119:88).

But let it not be forgotten that throughout the entire process of mortification and vivification there is a concurrence between the believer and the Spirit. Those who are born again should show the reality of that miracle of grace by being as earnest in the pursuit of holiness as they were formerly in seeking the pleasures of sin. Living unto God does not connote a single act done once for all (at a "consecration" meeting), but is what must mark the general course of our conduct. The Christian is required to put forth his best endeavours: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:11-13). Alas, how often God has cause to say, "There is none that calleth upon My name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Me" (Isa. 64:7). O that we may "stir up the gift of God, which is in us" (2 Tim. 1:6).

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