

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3).

It is pleasant to know that somebody is willing for us to be sanctified. Often the Church is not. Sanctification is peculiarly a Methodist doctrine, but we have known presiding elders and bishops of that church to persecute and drive ministers out of their connection because they obtained and professed this blessing. Members of a person's own family will often look upon him who obtains this blessing with a touch of pity as mildly insane. Church leaders will say to young preachers: "You'll be ruined if you become a holiness preacher."

Yet, unlike these opposers in the Church and out of it, God tells us it is His will that we should be sanctified. Read the text again. I. What Is Sanctification?

The Greek New Testament lexicon will make it plain. "The adjective *hagios* primarily means pure, clean, without blemish, holy, morally pure, upright, blameless in heart and life." The verb *hagiazō*, derived from the adjective, means "To make clean, to purify, to sanctify." The noun *hagiasmos* means "sanctification, purity of heart and life, holiness produced by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 6:19-22; 1 Thess. 4:3,7, 8; Heb. 12:14; 2 Thess. 2:13).

This is the testimony of the New Testament lexicon. The Standard English Dictionary defines "sanctification" as "The gracious work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer (not the sinner) is freed from sin and exalted to holiness of heart and life." Notice:--

(1) It is the Spirit's work. Sanctification is not the result of culture, education, growth, striving, self-discipline, self-development, death or purgatory." The Greek New Testament teaches that this blessing is obtained immediately, here and now, by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8, 9). Notice --

(2) "Whereby the believer." Then it is a second work of grace obtained only after conversion."

(3) "The believer is freed from sin" (inbred sin or depravity) . The great discussion of St. Paul in the fifth to the eighth chapters of Romans shows that it means we are "freed from depravity" according to the interpretation of the world's best scholarship.

We have all inherited depravity through race connection from Adam. This sanctification of the Holy Spirit is its only cure. It alone cleanses the heart from the propensity to sin, and makes it clean and pure.

As Worcester's Dictionary says: "Sanctification is cleansing from corruption, purifying from the dominion of sin."

Now II. Consider The Evidences That Christians May Obtain Such A Blessing.

We might draw a most satisfactory and, as we believe, unanswerable argument:

(1) From the nature and character of God. Surely an infinitely holy God must hate every kind of sin with an infinite, eternal hatred: and He must do everything that is right and reasonable to help us get rid of it. He will never force us to be holy against our wills: but if we will consent to be made holy, and will seek His help, He will make us holy. Jesus said: "All power is given me in heaven and on earth," and "He came to destroy the works of the devil."

Now the greatest work of the devil in us was the implanting of depravity, or the spirit of alienation from God, in every human breast. But Jesus has ample power to destroy it: and He will destroy it if we will permit Him and will co-operate with Him.

A man said to his friend: "It took two to sanctify me." "Who were they?" "Why, it took me and God." "Well, what did God do?" "He sanctified me." "And what did you do?" "I let Him." This is the truth put in few words. We seek: God sanctifies.

(2) Another evidence of the possibility of such an experience is that it is God's will. Our text says: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Only ourselves can frustrate this will of God.

(3) Jesus prayed for it. "Sanctify them" (John 17:17). God will never refuse to answer the prayer of His holy Son.

Nothing can prevent this blessing coming to us but our own opposition to the will of God.

(4) God commanded it. "Like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourself also holy in all manner of living; he cause it is written, Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

(5) Our Savior commanded it. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

(6) Jesus died for it. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it" (Eph. 5:25,26). "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

Now the adorable God will never permit His holy Son to die in vain. Be sure some people are going to be sanctified: and it may as well be you as anyone. It will be you if you will be a candidate for the blessing and comply with the conditions.

(7) God calls us to be sanctified. "For God calls us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:7).

(8) God chose us to be sanctified. "God chose you, beloved of the Lord, from the beginning unto salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Nothing but obstinate unbelief will shut us out from this blessing (2 Thess. 2:13).

(9) God promises this blessing to all that earnestly seek it. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness (rightness of heart), for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). "The God of peace himself Sanctify you wholly. . . . Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

(10) We are taught to pray for it. The Lord's prayer is a prayer for sanctification, and it dovetails into our text as if meant to be a part of it. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Are they not all holy in heaven? Are they not all free from every form of sin there? Have they not all pure and holy hearts there? Holiness is the very life and breath and atmosphere of heaven. Then we are to be like that on earth.

Does anyone dare to say that Jesus taught us to pray for that which cannot be realized? Never! Therefore, we may be sanctified on earth before we reach heaven.

God declares that nothing shall enter heaven that defileth or worketh abomination or maketh a lie." The depravity in human hearts does nothing else than defile and corrupt the imaginations and the thoughts. He perverts the appetites and desires.

This depravity, this wicked alienation from God does nothing else but "work abominations and make deceits in the individual life, in the family, in the church, in the school, in the community, in the nation, in all the world. The world war, with all its indescribable horrors and infamies, was only the depravity of hell let loose in human hearts to fester, and corrupt, and blight, and destroy humanity, and blot out the image of God from the nature of man.

No wonder the triune God hates it and wills its destruction. No wonder His infinite love has procured a perfect remedy; but it cost the awful price of Calvary and the atoning death of the only begotten Son of God.

Beloved, shall we allow that awful price to be paid in vain, so far as we are concerned? Shall you and I reject so great a salvation procured for us at such a price? If we do, our damnation will be deserved and swift and inevitable. .

"Without sanctification no man shall see the Lord."