

## The Reason For Our Hope

### ~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

"But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

The commentator Godbey asks: "How shall we sanctify Christ in our hearts?" He answers: "The Christian has Christ and depravity in his heart. Christ rules or He would not stay: But He has a rival. Cast out all else, and let Christ rule alone."

Is such a state of heart possible? Can a poor sinner, down in the ditch of sin, abhorred by others and abhorring himself, climb to such an extraordinary height of grace in a few days? Can one who is an alien by birth and a sinner by choice, condemned to God's wrath, and fit fuel for eternal burnings, come into such a sublime relationship to God almost immediately? Can his sins be blotted out and pardoned for ever, and Christ be enthroned within, so that he shall be indwelt and possessed by the Spirit of God, and his heart be pure and his life holy?

Exactly this and nothing less than this is our sublime hope. It is beyond philosophy. It surpasses reason. It begs description. But it is blessedly true. The star of hope shines through all the clouds of past sins, and all the darkness of ungodly years. We dare to believe that although we were born with depravity, and have committed sins innumerable, yet, through the grace of an atoning Savior, our sins have been forgiven, our hearts have been cleansed, and by growth in grace we are now being fitted for glory, in God's own time, to be received into heaven to dwell with Him forever.

What reason have we for such a daring hope? I. Because God Has Provided For The Pardon And Regeneration Of Sinners

He held out a marvelous encouragement to those who would turn their back upon sin and look to Him for mercy. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Is. 4:7). Again He looked in compassion upon us, as we were staggering along under the crushing load of sin, and said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." We still were dull of hearing and went on downward, as if intoxicated with sin and enamored with death. Again in loving pity for the sure doom that awaited us, He said: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There came a day, how well we remember it, when we grew weary of sin. We longed for rest from the heavy burden. We took God at His word, and helplessly threw ourselves upon His mercy. And, to the praise of His name we witness, we were not disappointed. He buried our sins in the depths of the sea of His infinite love, and we saw the burden no more. II. We Cherish This Because God Provided Sanctification For All His Children, And Made It Possible For Us To Be Cleansed And Holy

Someone exclaims: "Show it. We want the proof." Very well, here it is; enough to satisfy the most incredulous:

(1) God PLANNED for our sanctification back in eternity. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should BE HOLY and without blemish before him in love" (Eph 1:4). And as if this single assurance were not enough, He tells us again: "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in SANCTIFICATION of the Spirit." Now, if, back in the ages, before the rock-foundations of the earth were laid a hundred million years ago, or the sons of God shouted for joy over a new-born world, God foresaw the sin and fall of our race, and all its dire consequences of woe, and provided for our pardon and sanctification, it is not unreasonable to expect this plan of God to be realized in time. We are certainly justified in coming to the throne of grace, and pleading for the fulfillment of the plan. .

(2) We are informed that it is GOD'S WILL that we should be sanctified. "For this is the will of God, even your SANCTIFICATION (1 Thess. 4:3). In other words, He planned it ages ago; and this gracious purpose is still the same. What an encouragement to us to seek the great blessing!

Does it never occur to you how we mock God if we do not do it? He taught us to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; THY WILL BE DONE, in earth as it is in heaven." . Stop there,

please. Now ask God what is His will concerning His children. He will reply quickly, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." What shall we do about it? Shall we seek the blessing? Or shall we go on mocking God by repeating a prayer that we do not even intend shall be answered? God, keep us back from such hypocrisy.

### (3) Sanctification is our INHERITANCE.

St. Paul said to an audience, "I commend you to God, and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Most of us are quite careful to look out for an inheritance. When we are the rightful heir to an estate we put in our claim. The children of God are all heirs to this inheritance. We can each go with all boldness to the court of heaven and put in our claim.

(4) The inheritance was bought for us by our Elder Brother. "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, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12, 13). Our precious Jesus shed His blood and poured out His life that we might each become sanctified and holy. How doubly precious and infinitely desirable it ought to make sanctification seem to us, when we learn that Jesus suffered with this end in view. We sympathize with the Christian sister whom we heard pray years ago: "O Lord, help us to experience in our own hearts and lives all that Jesus bought for us with His own blood." We shall never forget how that prayer struck through our heart with conviction for sanctification. We never got over it until we went to the fountain for cleansing. Is it too much to say that Christians who, knowingly, reject sanctification are blood despisers and Christ-rejecters?

### (5) God COMMANDS us to have sanctification.

Surely it is not rash for us to obey our heavenly Father Who says, "Like as he which called you is holy, he ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living: because it is written, Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16). He wants us to be like Him in our inner nature. He so created the race "in His own image." But the race fell, and depravity resulted, and it has been passed down by race connection to every son and daughter of Adam. Each of us was born with a tendency to sin and a trend toward evil, and "an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living God." This is a grief to our heavenly Father. And He has prepared a remedy: the heart-cleansing baptism with the Holy Spirit for sanctification.

Oh, the shame of it, if we refuse this blessing, and prefer to retain within us a spirit of alienation from God! And, oh, the peril of it! It means downright disobedience: and that persisted in means the death of the soul. Obedience is the soul of religion. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my Commandments; he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:15 and 21). How is it? Do you love Jesus enough to seek sanctification and be holy in order to please Him? If not, if you only have a little fashionable, gushing, sentimental admiration for Jesus, your carnal mind will easily persuade you to ignore His command and live on with a heart infested with sin.

### (6) God calls us to sanctification.

"God calls us not for uncleanness but unto sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:7). "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT and belief of the truth, whereunto He CALLED YOU through our gospel." God will not force this blessing upon us: but oh! how urgently He calls us to have it. By the fitful tempers and unruly passions and unholy longings of our poor wayward hearts, He speaks. By the restlessness and hunger of our souls for a closer walk with God, He urges. By His blessed Word, and the convicting and wooing influences of His Holy Spirit, He calls to the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

### (7) Jesus PRAYED that we might have sanctification.

"Sanctify them" (John 17:17). Is it improper to seek for, and expect to realize in this life, what Jesus prayed for in that solemn upper chamber on the night before He suffered for us? When the shadows of death were upon Him, and He could already feel its pangs in anticipation, He thought of our need, and prayed that we might be sanctified. Shall we let that intercessory prayer he offered in vain?

(8) Jesus is faithful to sanctify us when we want it done. "Faithful is He that calleth you" (to sanctification -- see previous verse and 1 Thess. 4:7) "Who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). Oh, the blessed fidelity of Jesus! How many countless thousands of times He has heard prayers for sanctification, and poured out His Spirit in efficacious, cleansing power!

(9) When it is done the HOLY GHOST WITNESSES to it. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, whereof, also, the HOLY SPIRIT BEARETH WITNESS to us." Others may make light of this whole subject and think that we are led by a delusion, but when Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Ghost, thus cleansing our hearts, and the Spirit bears witness to the work, and wakes the joys of heaven within us, and gives "the peace that passeth understanding," it does not matter much what others say about it.

(10) Jesus is NOT ASHAMED of those who have this blessing. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11). There are a great many professing Christians who are so unlike Christ, and weak, and worldly, and unstable, and unfruitful, that they must be a grief to the angels, and Jesus must be ashamed of them. But when He gets a believer sanctified and Spirit-filled, Jesus is not ashamed of him.

(11) The end is heaven.

"Now being free from the sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto SANCTIFICATION, and the end ETERNAL LIFE" (Rom. 6:22). Now, these are the reasons for the blessed hope within us. We think they are good reasons. And so, in spite of the sneers and derisions of worldly and backslidden professors, we go shouting along on our way to heaven.