

VI.

Christ Our Sanctification.

"Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us...sanctification."—*1 Cor. i. 30.*

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The redeemed soul possesses all *things* in Christ. He is a complete Savior. He lacks nothing. Having Him we are saved to the uttermost; without Him we are utterly lost and undone.

We must earnestly maintain this point, especially with reference to sanctification; and repeat with increasing clearness that Christ is given us of God not only for wisdom and righteousness, but also for *sanctification*.

It reads distinctly that Christ is our *righteousness* and *sanctification*. This translation is perfectly correct. The Greek does not read, "dikaiōsis," which is *justification*, but "dikaiosúnē," which never refers to the act of *making* righteous, but to the condition of being righteous, therefore *righteousness*. So it does not read, "*hágios*" or "*hagiosúnē*," which might refer to holiness, but it reads distinctly, "*hagiosmós*," which points to the act of *making* holy.

What the apostle distinguished so clearly should not be confounded.

St. Paul and the Church of Corinth are believers. They are justified in Christ already, once for all; for Christ was made righteousness unto them. But this is not the case with sanctification. "Even the holiest men have only small beginnings of this obedience, which constrain them to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God" (Heidelberg Catechism, q. 114). But the work is only just begun. Compared to former times, there is a holier love and spirit in them, but they are by no means wholly sanctified. They are under the treatment of the Spirit, their Sanctifier. They become more and more conformable to the image of God (q. 15). Hence there are degrees of progress in holiness. In those but recently converted, sanctification has progressed but little; in others it has made glorious progress. So there are in the Church holy, holier, and holiest persons (q. 114).

Since the justification of the ungodly is at once finished, and the sanctification of the regenerate proceeds but slowly and gradually, St. Paul writes to the Corinthians with perfect precision that Christ is to him and them no more *righteous-making*, but *righteousness*; on the contrary, He had not yet become to them *holiness*, but only *holy-making*.

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This being well understood, it is impossible to be mistaken. If the apostle had intended to enumerate in the *abstract* all that a lost sinner possesses in Christ, he would have said: "*Wise-making*, *righteous-making*, and *holy-making*"; for a lost sinner walks still in his foolishness, is not yet made righteous, etc. But he describes his own experience, saying, that like a star the wisdom of God had arisen in his dark soul; that for Christ's sake he has obtained pardon and satisfaction, wherefore he stands perfectly righteous before God: and that now he is being *made holy* and *being redeemed*. He is not yet redeemed entirely; the Greek

“apolutrosis” denotes also here a *continued action* of being made free from inward and outward misery.

The Heidelberg Catechism (q. 60) describes the, righteous standing of the soul before God in the following striking manner:

“Q. How art thou righteous before God?

“A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ: so that, tho my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commands of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and *holiness* of Christ; even so as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yes, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ hath accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.”

The fact that this answer makes righteousness to include holiness has led less thoughtful men to infer that sanctification and justification are the same thing. Discussed at the Synod of Dort, this question was settled by inserting into article 22 of the Confession the following clause: “Jesus Christ imputing to us all His merits, and so many holy works, which He has done for us and in our stead, is our Righteousness.”

What does justification then include? Not the sanctification of *our persons*, but the sum-total of the holy works which we owe God according to the law. Question 60 calls this “our holiness.”

The difference between the two is clearly seen in Adam and Eve in Paradise. They were created *personally holy*; there was nothing unholy about them. But they had not yet fulfilled the law. They did not possess holy works. They had not acquired a treasure of holiness. Personally, one can be holy without having a single grain of accomplished or acquired holiness; and, on the other hand, one may have a perfectly fulfilled law without having the slightest function of personal holiness. Christ in the manger was perfectly holy, but He had not yet fulfilled the law, hence He had not an acquired holiness to present to us in our place. But in the hour of his justification the child of God receives (1) the complete remission of his punishment on the ground of Christ’s *atonement*; (2) the complete remission of his indebtedness on the ground of Christ’s *satisfaction*. And this satisfaction is but a perfect fulfilment of the law; a complete presentation of all good works; hence a perfect manifestation of holiness. Between questions 114 and 115 there is, therefore, not the slightest conflict.

Sanctification and holiness are two different things. Holiness, in the 60th question, has reference, not to personal dispositions and desires, but to *the sum-total of all the holy works required by the law*. Sanctification, on the contrary, refers not to any work of the law, but exclusively to the work of *creating holy dispositions in the heart*.



If one asks, Is Christ your holiness as much as He is your *righteousness* and in the same sense? we answer: Yes, indeed, bless the Lord; He is my complete holiness before God, just as much as my perfect righteousness. The one is just as absolute and certain as the other. The performance of all the holy works required by the law of every man, according to the Covenant of Works, is a vicarious act of Christ in the fullest sense of the word. Wherefore we confess that the holy works which Christ has done for us are just as positively an imputed holiness, as we stand right before God by an imputed righteousness. Nothing can be added to it. It is whole, perfect, and complete in every respect.

And that which is done for us in our stead is not again required of us. This would be morally absurd. According to the Covenant of Works, neither the law nor the lawgiver has anything more to demand of us. It is a finished work. The penalty is suffered, and the holiness required by the law is presented. We are perfectly righteous before God and our own consciousness, inasmuch as we receive this unspeakable benefit with a believing heart.

But all that has nothing to do with our sanctification. In addition to the imputed righteousness and holy works, our sanctification comes next in order.

From sin proceed guilt, penalty, and stain. From these three we must be delivered. From the penalty by Christ's atonement; from guilt by His satisfaction; and from the stain by sanctification. After God has redeemed us from the everlasting doom, we are still unholy, downtrodden in our unclean blood. Adam's inherent, holy disposition and desire are not yet restored to us. On the contrary, the stain of sin is there still. We delight in the law of God after the inward man, but we also find sin present always and everywhere in the sin-stain of body and soul. And God wills that this shall not continue. For the stain of sin He will substitute a holy disposition. He resolves to reform us inwardly, to renew us after the image of His dear Son, *i.e.*, to sanctify us.

It is only now that He begins to make us personally holy. As His children, we are dear to Him as the apple of His eye; He has engraven our names in the palms of His hands. We neglect things indifferent, but we polish the precious jewel. An old garment is cast aside, but we remove the stain from the costly silken gown. The housewife adorns the beloved homestead, and the gardener, pulls the weeds from his garden-beds. In like manner, compelled by His love, God wills that His child, body and soul, be made bright until sin's stain be wholly removed.

This is the work of sanctification, aiming exclusively at our personal sanctification, to restore unto us the holiness of Adam before he had performed any holy work.

In Adam, *personal* holiness came first, then holiness consisting in the fulfilment of the law; but to God's child, the *latter*, imputed to him for Christ's sake, is imparted first, and his personal holiness follows. As Adam was *created* holy, so the regenerated is *made* holy.

The personal sanctification of the regenerated and converted sinner begins after the quickening of faith; continues with more or less interruption all the days of his life; is finished,



so far as the soul is concerned, in death, and, regarding the body, at the coming of the Lord. And since this is wrought by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, the Scripture confesses that Christ is not only our Righteousness, but also our Sanctification.

VII.

Application of Sanctification.

“Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”

—*Rom. viii. 29.*

At His own time, and with irresistible grace, God translates His elect from death unto life. He gives them faith and the consciousness of being justified in Christ; and by conversion He puts their feet in the way of life. Thus they are free from guilt. There is for them no condemnation. Neither hell nor devil can prevail against them. Hence the apostle’s shout of victory: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (*Rom. viii. 33, 34*)

God’s child has formal proof of his justification not only in the Word, but also in Christ Himself, who continually presents His sacrifice before the Throne. Whether he has conscious enjoyment of this is immaterial. In his sleep, in fever’s delirium, bereft of reason by physical causes, he continues God’s child. Independent of sensations, experiences, and frames of mind; yea, tho he has never wept a tear of repentance, he possesses his treasure under all circumstances. Idiots even may possess it. Why should God have no children among them? Of course, under normal conditions *conscious faith* is the rule; but salvation does not depend upon the soul’s actual experience. When you walk in the sun your shadow is visible; but your existence does not depend upon your shadow.

It should be emphasized that sanctification does not imply human efforts and exertions to supplement Christ’s work: but it is the additional grace of creating in the saint supernaturally a holy *disposition*.

Sin imparts pollution, *i.e.*, there can be no sin without begetting sin: Sin generates sin, imparts sin, is always the mother of sin. If this sin-begetting process were not stopped in our hearts, sin’s chain would remain unbroken, link upon link, and only sin would be the result.

But this is not the divine purpose. God wills that men should see our good works and glorify the Father which is in heaven. Therefore God has prepared good works that we should walk in them. But if the stain of sin were to work in us without any interruption, we could not walk in them. Not one of us could ever do a single good work. Light would never shine in the children of light, and there would be no occasion to glorify the Father in heaven. Good works wrought in us by the Holy Spirit *independently* of us can not offer such occasion. His works are always *holy*; there is nothing surprising in that. But when He causes holy works to proceed *from us* in such a way that they are truly *our own*, then there is occasion for praise—*Matt. v. 16*. Then men will ask in surprise, Who wrought this in them? and