

## 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

looking up will glorify the Father. And then the fearful continuity of sin called “stain” is broken; then the law that sin must beget sin, *i.e.*, cultivate the sinful disposition, is replaced by another law which gradually introduces the holy disposition.

This holy disposition can not spring from man, not even from regeneration. A starving child can not grow, neither can the child of God proceed to sanctification if left to himself. Altho sanctification is organically connected with the implanted life, yet it does not germinate without the constant showers of grace. Wherefore it is the free gift of the Father of Lights.

The indwelling Spirit is the actual Worker. He performs it in all the saints, not partly, but wholly, both in life and in death, or in the hour of death alone. The latter applies to elect children, to idiots and insane persons, and to persons converted on their deathbed. In all others He performs it during their lifetime and in the hour of their departure.

But there is a difference in different persons. In some the Holy Spirit begins sanctification in their childhood; in others at maturity. In some it proceeds almost without any interruption; in others it is hindered by conflict or apostasy. But in all He acts according to His pleasure. Sanctification is an artistic embroidery wrought in the soul, and He insures that it shall be finished at the moment appointed for our entrance into the New Jerusalem: but the manner and measure of progress depend solely upon His pleasure and purpose.

*First*, sanctification is closely related to Christ, and is part of the Covenant grace which He insures to us as our Surety. It is not merely His work, but a grace inherent in His Person, and so identified with Him that the apostle exclaims: “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification?” It is related to the *unio mystica*: He vitally in us, and we vitally in Him; He the Vine, and we the branches: “It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me”; ([Gal. ii. 20](#)) He the Head, and we the members. All these indicate the vital union between the believer and the Mediator. The unborn child may be said to breathe through the mother’s breath, and the mother to breathe in the child. The same is true here, altho the comparison illustrates, but does not exhaust the matter.

Hence God’s child can never be but in Christ. Not that he is always conscious of it. He often feels as tho Christ were far from him, and, deceived by this, he often strays so far that the bond of union seems to be utterly dissolved. This is really not so, for Christ never loses His hold; but to him it seems so. And this is the cause of the difficulty. In this condition his sinful nature alone is left him; all his treasure of grace is left with Jesus. For this reason the liturgy says: “Outside of Christ we lie in the midst of death.” When with Dinah we leave the patriarchal tent to take the road to Shechem, we do so at our own risk and charges, having but Adam’s inheritance, *viz.*, a dead soul and a corrupt nature. Then to imagine that we have anything in ourselves acceptable to God is tantamount to a denial of Immanuel. With Köhlbrugge we say: “Considered outside of Christ, the converted and the unconverted are exactly alike.”



But, altho we forsake Him, He never forsakes us; there is between the converted in his deepest fall and the unconverted this immeasurable difference, that the soul of the former is inseparably bound to Jesus and the soul of the latter is not.

*Second*, the sanctification of the saint is unthinkable without Christ, because the implanting of the holy disposition by the Divine Spirit is: "That we become more and more conformable to the image of God until we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come" (Heidelberg Catechism, q. 115). And is this not Christ's image?

To be sanctified, then, means *to have Christ obtain stature in us*. It is not a few confused signs of holiness, but an *organic whole* of pure desire and inclination stamped upon the soul, embracing all the powers of the human spirit and disposition. Hence its progress can not be measured or numbered, ten degrees now and fifteen next year. It is the reflection of Christ's form upon the mirror-surface of the soul; first in dim outlines, gradually more distinct, until the experienced eye recognizes in it the form of Jesus. But even in the most advanced it is never more than a *daguerreotype*; Immanuel's *perfect image* will be revealed in us only in and through death.

The holy disposition is a "perfect man," *i.e.*, a form embracing the saint's *whole personality*; an expression of Christ's *complete* image, and therefore covering our entire human being.

How foolish, then, to speak of sanctification as a result of human effort. When the person disappears, does not his shadow go with him? How, then, could Christ's image, form, or shadow remain in us when in our wanderings the soul is separated from Him? The brightness disappears with the light. A shadow can not be retained. This is why Immanuel is our sanctification in the fullest sense of the word. *His form reflecting itself in the soul and the soul retaining that reflection* is the whole work of sanctification.

Finally, to the question, How can sanctification implant a holy disposition, if it depends upon the reflection of Jesus's form in the soul, since a denial or temporal apostasy separates us from Him? we answer: Can an inherent disposition not exist and continue without being exercised? One may have acquired the disposition (habit) of speaking fluent English, but not speak it for a whole year. So may the disposition or habit of holy desire cleave to the soul, even tho the stream of unholiness cover it for a season. And the soul is fully aware of this by the inward struggle of the conscience. If Jesus could lose His hold upon us, yea, then the holy disposition could not remain. But, since amid the deepest fall, the soul remains unconsciously in His hand, the objection has no weight.



## VIII.

### Sanctification in Fellowship with Immanuel

“But now have ye your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life.”—*Rom. vi. 22.*

The *third* reason why our sanctification is in Christ is: that He has *obtained* it, that it flows *from Him*, and that He *guarantees* it.

Having your mind thoroughly divested from the false idea that sanctification is your own embroidery, holding fast the clear doctrine that it is a gift of grace, this third reason will appeal to you. If sanctification is a gift, a favor, the question arises: What for? Is it a reward for the labor of your soul? Fruit of your prayer? Encouragement on the way? Is it on account of your loveliness, piety, goodness? Is it for anything in *you*? For there must be a  *motive*. That God should bestow the precious and enduring gift of sanctification on persons who with both hands oppose it, and with rough fingers mar its beauty, is inconceivable. What was it, then, that moved the Lord God to favor you? You say: “His unfathomable pleasure, which is the deepest ground of all our salvation.” Very well; but the divine counsel does not work as by magic. All that proceeds from that counsel runs its course, and shows its links that give it consistency.

Hence the question must be asked: “Who is it that obtained for you the gracious gift of sanctification?” And the answer is: “Our Redeemer; sanctification is the fruit of the Cross.”

There is no division of labor in the redemptive work. Christ did not obtain on the cross our righteousness only; leaving it for us by conflict and self-denial to obtain our sanctification; but there is One who labors, the others enter into His rest; He has trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.

God has ordered our sanctification to flow from Christ directly. The Holy Spirit is the Worker, yet whatever He imparts to us He takes from Christ. “He shall receive of Mine; and He shall glorify Me.” This is no empty phrase, but sober reality.

What a redeemed soul needs is a *human* holiness. A *man* must be sanctified, not an angel. The latter can not be sanctified. Once fallen, he is lost forever. Created and fallen like Adam, he can not be restored like Adam. Knowing nothing of redemption, angels desire to look into it. Hence when, despite sin, God brings an innumerable company of men and angels to eternal life, He effects this by sanctifying the elect among unholy men; while the elect angels need no sanctification, for they have never become unholy. Sanctification refers, therefore, exclusively to *men*; imparts a holiness made possible and ordained only for men; creates a disposition bearing a human form and character, calculated for the peculiar needs of the human heart.

