**VOLUME 8; CHAPTER 13 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SANCTIFICATION by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*In sanctification of the Spirit.*

*2 Thessalonians 2:13 1 Peter 1:2*

THE TWO OUTSTANDING FIGURES IN THE BOOK OF THE ACTS of the Apostles are Peter and Paul. Each in his respective sphere was a pioneer in the great Christian campaign springing from the Pentecostal effusion. The phrase which suggests the line of our evening meditation is found in the writings of each of these men. Peter employed it in writing to Christian Jews of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Paul made use of it writing to Gentile Christians of Thessalonica. The phrase refers to a great purpose of God in the life of men, sanctification. Moreover, the phrase reveals to us the fact that this purpose is possible of fulfilment in the life of men through the ministry of the Holy Spirit: "in sanctification of the Spirit."

I am perfectly well aware that this is not a sentence; it is not a statement. I am equally well aware that I take it from its context, but I trust that in our meditation on the things that it suggests we shall do no violence to that context. When, perchance, at your leisure you turn again to the paragraph read in your hearing by way of lesson, you will discover that the great theme of Peter and of Paul was salvation, and in this connection, dealing with the subject in different ways and from different standpoints, but with one purpose, each of these outstanding figures in the book of the Acts of the Apostles makes use of the phrase, "in sanctification of the Spirit."

There are two phases, then, of consideration that I propose to you. First, sanctification in regeneration; second, sanctification in experience. Let me immediately say that these must not be separated from each other as though they were distinct. They may be separated, however, for the purpose of teaching. There is a sense in which they cannot be separated from each other, for that sanctification which is provided for us in regeneration is potentially what we need for the final perfecting of our lives according to the great and gracious will of God. Apart from that regeneration, there can be no final sanctification. On the other hand, I think we may grant immediately that to which I shall refer again, that there are multitudes of men and women who without any hesitation would claim to have received the gift of life, who can rejoice in the fact that they have been born from above, who, nevertheless, would hardly claim to know the experience of sanctification. Consequently, I think I am justified in dividing our meditation into these two parts: sanctification in regeneration, and sanctification in experience.

In dealing with the first of these, let me immediately say that this word "sanctification" is undoubtedly one of the great words of the New Testament, and, at the same time, it is a word singularly feared by Christian men and women today. Indeed, not only is this particular word feared by Christian men and women, but all its cognate words, terms which have relationship to the idea that it presents, are feared. Its equivalent holiness, or the phrase, Christian perfection, are avoided by thousands of Christian men and women in our churches today; they are afraid of the terms. I am not at all surprised that multitudes of Christian people are afraid of these terms. So many insane things have been done in the name of sanctification, so many unrighteous things have been practiced by people who profess holiness, and so much appalling imperfection has been witness in the lives of those claiming Christian perfection, that one is not surprised that many Christian people are afraid of the terminology. I believe that often the fear is born of true sanctity of life; in many cases it is a protest against an altogether unwarranted narrowness of interpretation, against a mechanical, ritualistic ideal of sanctification which excludes from the experience of Christian men and women whole areas of life which they ought to capture and consecrate rather than abandon. But it is not fair to abandon a great New Testament word or a great New Testament doctrine because the word has had evil associations and because the doctrine has been misinterpreted. It is surely rather the duty of those who desire to enter into the real meaning of their life in Christ to inquire what God means by sanctification. He has left us in no doubt; in this New Testament the teaching is quite clear as to what His purpose is. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." If that be true, then it is my business to find out what that will is. I ought not to be satisfied with anything in my life that falls short of that will. Moreover, I ought to set myself resolutely to enter into that will, even if in so doing I have to act in opposition to a great many who are speaking to me of sanctification in terms other than those of the New Testament, or calling me to something to which the New Testament never calls me.

I trust these preliminary words do not suggest an air of controversy. Nothing is further from my purpose. I have spoken them that I may capture those who are afraid of this great theme.

What, then, is sanctification? The root idea of the word so translated in the New Testament signifies something which is awful, that which fills the soul with awe, not necessarily with dread, for there is a vital difference between dread and awe. Dread is of the nature of slavish fear; awe is of the nature of reverence. There should be no dread in the soul of man when he draws near to God. No man ought to draw near to God save with a sense of awe. The thought of the word is that of something awful, filling the soul with awe. Its use in the New Testament is always of separation to God, and therefore of holiness. The vessels of the sanctuary in the old economy were holy, they were sanctified; they were set apart to sacred uses, and, consequently, they were necessarily maintained in cleanliness by ceremonial ablutions, and that because they were dedicated and consecrated to the service of God alone. In the word "sanctification," then, both as to its root intention and its common use in the New Testament, we have these simple ideas. Sanctification is entire separation of the life to God; consequently, it is the cleansing of the life to the condition of holiness or spiritual health.

Every new-born soul is sanctified. Every believer is a saint. Christian people will often say, the sincerest of them, those who are most truly and really attempting to follow their Lord: We do not profess to be saints. That saying is born of that fear of the doctrine of sanctification to which I have made reference. Let me repeat, therefore, that which I have already said, but in another form. If you are a Christian man you are a saint. If you are a believer in Christ Jesus you are already sanctified. Perhaps the speediest way in which to emphasize the truth is to remember that Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, commenced his first letter - almost wholly a letter of correction - by describing those to whom he wrote as "saints," and yet, within a few paragraphs, after having so described them, he said, "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." Yet they were saints, they were sanctified. It is quite evident that the apostolic reference in the opening of that letter was to the Divine purpose, and not to the perfected experience of these people. They were saints, they were sanctified; but they were not living as became saints, they had not entered into the full experience of sanctification. In that we have at once a distinction and a difference which it is important that we should recognize. To call men to sanctification who are already Christians as though they were not sanctified is to lose the most powerful argument for sanctification possible. It is when we realize that the man who had yielded himself to God by one volitional act of faith has become a saint that we have the right to appeal to him to enter into the experience of sanctification, because by failing to do so he is robbing God of that which is God's by sovereign and redeeming right. Sanctification is not a privilege offered to the few within the Christian economy. It is a privilege, but it is also a responsibility devolving on every soul who has yielded to Christ. Saints within the Christian Church are not an aristocracy of spiritual souls; they are the whole commonwealth of the new-born. We owe a persistent and pernicious misinterpretation of the great doctrine of sanctification to the Roman Church, with its calendar of saints. We all are familiar with the phrase, counsel of perfection; men in business use it, men in the ordinary life of every day use it; the meaning of the phrase is that the idea referred to is a fine one but that it cannot be realized. This phrase comes from the Roman Church. Counsels of perfection are laws and instructions for those who desire to enter into the life of saintship. They teach that no man can live the saintly life unless he withdraw himself, not from actual sin alone, but from all the ordinary activities of every day life. They declare that no man can be a saint save as he retires from the highway to the cloister, and to seclusion and the loneliness of meditation and prayer, and by these methods perfect himself into saintship. The New Testament teaches that men can be saints in fishing boats, in varying places in the midst of travail and toil, in all the turmoil of life, or else they can be saints no-where. Sanctification is a condition of life enabling men to enter into the common vocations of all the days and irradiate them so that they themselves shall become God's means of revealing Himself to others on the dusty highway of life. Sanctification, I repeat, is not the privilege of the few; it is the birthright and responsibility of the whole commonwealth of Christian men and women.

In what sense, then, can we affirm that sanctification comes to men in regeneration? Regeneration is that act of the Holy Spirit in which He supplies the life necessary to carrying out a covenant with God. The first word of the message of Jesus to the world in the days of His preaching, and until this hour, is, "Repent." When a man hears that word, and in obedience thereto thinks again and changes his conception of life, he will immediately become conscious of his own shortcoming, not merely of his past sin, but of his present incapacity for godliness; and to that new-born sense of incapacity Christ will present Himself with the second word of His message, which is, Believe on the Son of God and thou shalt have life. When a man obeys the word, "repent," and yields himself in confidence to the Saviour Christ, he is entering into a new covenant with God. All that is but the human side of the great transaction that makes a man a Christian, and it is immediately responded to on the Divine side by the birth from above, the communication of new life, the filling of the life with the Spirit, changing the outlook, changing the desires, changing the whole set of the life, as it is placed in living, vital, actual relationship with God Himself. This covenant between God and man is the covenant of restoration.

It is a covenant of will. God wills the good of man and man wills the glory of God, and they enter into a sacred covenant, God to secure man's good, and man to seek for God's glory.

It is a covenant of emotion. God loves man, and enters into a covenant to work on his behalf and seek for him the highest and the best; and man finds his heart responsive to the love of God, for "we love Him because He first loved us," and enters into a covenant to love and serve Him. God covenants in love, to care for man; and man covenants in love that he will endeavor so to live as to give no sorrow to the heart of God.

It is, moreover, a covenant of intelligence. God, as God perfectly knowing man, covenants with man to place all His infinite wisdom at the disposal of man; on his part, man, knowing something of God, gives himself to ever-increasing study of God that he may know Him perfectly.

Let any man make that covenant with God; let me make it with Him as though I had never made it before. Conscious of my past of sin, and conscious of my need for repentance and of my own incapacity for all high and holy things, and yet earnestly desiring those things by His illumination, I desire to enter into a covenant with God through Christ - a covenant of will, a covenant of love, a covenant of knowledge. Therefore I stand, turned to God with a strong and true desire, but utterly unable to fulfil my desire. Men will never get beyond that unless there be for them some super-natural bestowment of power from on high.

This, then, is the Christian evangel, that now the Spirit is given through that Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who in the past eternity emptied Himself in order that He might fill men with the Spirit. With the incoming of that Spirit there is bestowed on the man who makes his covenant with God the life that shall enable him to fulfil that covenant; new strength of will, new passion of love, new illumination of knowledge, that in the power of that life communicated, he may keep his covenant with God. That takes place in the hour when a man yields himself to God to obey, and by that covenant, ratified and rendered dynamic by the Holy Spirit of God, a man becomes separated to God, holy to God, a saint of God. Whether in the sight of men I know not and care little, but in the sight of angels that man becomes an awful being. Suppose - and why not? - that even already, while I have been trying to speak by way of teaching, some man, all unknown to friend or neighbor, has made his covenant with God, even though no tongue of fire has appeared to these eyes of sense, no sound as of a mighty rushing wind has been heard, yet the Spirit of God has baptized that man into life, and he has become a saint of God, and immediately all orders of angels view him as an awful being in the universe of God, a man separated to God, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?"

Speaking from my own conviction, it is when I have seen this thing that I have discovered the profoundest argument for a life of true sanctification. Let me therefore now speak of sanctification in experience. We may be sanctified ideally, potentially, but not empirically, or experientially. That is the story of thousands of us. We were perfectly sincere as we turned our back on sin and our faces to God, perfectly sincere as we cried out for salvation and yielded ourselves in faith to the perfect Saviour. In that hour of our sincerity we were made children of God, sons of God, we were sanctified; but we have never entered into the experience of sanctification. The experience of sanctification is a positive event, it is a progressive exercise, and, finally, it will be a perfecting excellence.

I speak of it first as a positive event. When may a man enter into sanctification experientially, positively? That experience may be coincident with regeneration. I am compelled to say, speaking now from experience, my own and that of those whom I have known in the Christian life, that it is not often coincident with regeneration. The fact is always coincident with regeneration, ideally, potentially, but not experientially. It was so in the case of Paul. I cannot find anywhere that Paul had a second blessing, and I cannot find any warrant for the doctrine of a second blessing as absolutely necessary in the teaching of the New Testament.

What, then, is this experience which I describe as a positive event? On the human side it is comprehension of the real meaning of the relationship which I entered into with Christ when I gave myself to Him. That is the first thing. I remember a generation ago hearing Dwight Lyman Moody say, "Christ is as great a Saviour as you make Him. What you ask He gives. If in your first coming you ask forgiveness, you receive it." That is quite true within limitations. He always gives me more than I ask, but I can appropriate only that which I ask or understand. I think one reason why a great many Christian people do not enter into the experience of sanctification in the hour of conscious regeneration is that we have not preached sanctification as we ought to have preached it, we have not presented to men all the truth concerning their relationship to Christ. There comes to the child of God, if not in the first hour of yielding, or of regeneration, yet sooner or later, by this ministry or that, this method or that, the comprehension of the real meaning of the relationship into which they entered with God. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." That is the program of the Christ-life. That is the full meaning of the covenant we make with God in Christ. When there breaks on the soul of the truly Christian man, the man truly born again and hitherto not having fully apprehended the meaning of his relationship to Christ, the meaning of that covenant, that God saved him, not from hell alone, but in order that he might be in himself a vessel meet for the Master's use, a vessel clean and pure and strong, an instrument of righteousness in the world, then he comes to the hour in which the event of santification is possible.

But the event on the human side is more than comprehension of the real meaning of the covenant; it is consent thereto. That is the point of struggle, if struggle there be; and I think there is always struggle. Oh, the spiritual tragedy of some men and women, who at some moment - it may be under the preaching of the Word, it may be in the quietness of their own meditation thereupon, it may be in a thousand ways to which I cannot refer - come to see what God really means, and then turn their backs on it, refusing to consent to the terms of the covenant, and withholding themselves from that abandonment to the will of God which is the secret of all sanctified life. Such men and women still gather in the sanctuary of God, still utter the shibboleths of the Kingdom. That is the tragedy of the Christian Church. We waste our time discussing statistics and attempting to galvanize dead men into activity, when what we supremely need is revival within the Church in order that there may be revival within the nation. Revival within the Church means going back to the point of disobedience in order that there may be obedience, a going back of saints to saintship, a going back that there may be confession, contrition, and that life may be given to God in all its fulness.

Wherever, on the human side, there is comprehension of the meaning of the covenant and true consent thereto, then immediately on the Divine side there is cleansing of the nature and the consecration of the soul of man to God. If in this hour - and let me speak with you rather than to you on such a theme as this - there shall come to me some fuller meaning of the covenant and I dare to consent, then in that moment the answer to my consent will be the cleansing of my nature by His Spirit and the consecration of my personality to Him. Then His Spirit will possess it to illuminate it, empower it, fill it with new and tender emotion.

Sanctification, experientially, is a progressive relation, for not by an event of light and conscious cleansing and consecration does any man come to maturity in the Christian character. All that is the condition for growth, not its ultimate perfection. Consequently, sanctification is a progressive exercise, it is gradual as well as sudden, that which is gradual resulting from that which is sudden; that which is sudden being the adjustment of the life to God and the immediate reception of the power; that which is gradual being the administration of the territory yielded, and appropriation of the blessings bestowed. So we go from strength to strength, from height to height, from light to light, from experience to experience. This is the work of the Spirit also, and that in two ways. First, the Christ revelation to the soul of the saint is a progressive revelation. The Spirit is always bringing the child of God some new vision of Christ. Then, whenever a new vision is presented to the trusting soul a new crisis is created for that soul, and the soul will either obey and march into larger life, or disobey and turn backward. The man or woman who has the largest, fullest knowledge of Christ is the man or woman who is most conscious that he or she has hardly yet begun to see His glory. The Spirit of God, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with infinite patience, is forevermore unveiling to the eyes of faithful, watching souls the glory of the Christ; and as each new glory is revealed it calls the soul to some new adventure, to some new exercise, to some new sacrifice; and wherever there is response to the revelation, realization follows. So by this process of illumination and instruction we grow up in all things into Him Who is the Head, even Christ Jesus.

Every response to light means fuller understanding and enlarged capacity for further revelation. The true Christian life is a growth, which finds no maturity in this world; the ultimate is never reached in this land of shadows. There is no exhausting of the light and glory and beauty of Christ, and if He has not startled and shamed me recently it is because somewhere in the past I disobeyed and have lost my power to see. Sanctification is progressive, the Spirit of God patiently leading us from point to point in the life of faith and light and love, and forevermore astonishing us with new unveilings of the glory of our Master.

At last sanctification will prove itself to be a perfecting excellence. There will come to those who follow on to know the Lord an hour of full and final realization. John said, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are ... and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." That is the final fact of sanctification, the perfect, absolute, and ultimate surrender of the life to Him and His surrender of Himself to the surrendered life. The God Who said of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," will ultimately say of all the saints He brings to glory, These are My beloved children, in whom also I am Well pleased. The last fact in the new creation is like the last fact in the first creation. When God had made man He rested from His labors, finding His rest in man in the perfection of his manhood. Jesus said amid the weariness and woes and wounds of humanity, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God and Christ together will find their eternal rest in the sanctified sons of men, perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

What is our present position if we are Christian men and women? We are "called saints" "in sanctification of the Spirit." What, then, is our present responsibility? That we "in santification of the should walk "as becometh saints" Spirit." That we should avail ourselves of the resources at our disposal. That we should refuse to be content with anything less than that which brings satisfaction to the heart of God our Father. That we should have done forever with comparing ourselves among ourselves. That we should have done forever with being at rest because men are satisfied with our Christian attainment. That we should press ever resolutely with new determination into the light of the Divine thought and the Divine requirement of our Father's will and purpose, always remembering that He has no high purpose for the soul of man but that He has provided power sufficient for the realization of that high purpose.

Let us make our covenant with God, and the Holy Spirit will give us life sufficient to enable us to fulfil it; or if we have already done so, then let us say, to no man but to our own hearts, as in the presence of God, We will be satisfied with nothing less than the comprehension of His meaning. In the measure in which we know that meaning, let us consent thereto, and that with perfect confidence that "He will perfect that which concerneth us."