



SANCTIFICATION  
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*H. Hughes Perry*

# SANCTIFICATION,

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# SANCTIFICATION,

AS EXHIBITED IN

THE WORD OF GOD:

*Progressive on Earth, Perfected in Heaven.*



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## PREFACE.

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THE writing of this brief treatise on Sanctification, has been suggested partly by the interest and importance of the subject in itself, partly by the frequency and urgency with which it has of late been pressed on the attention of Christians, but chiefly by the prevalence of views regarding it which are believed to be unscriptural and dangerous. Controversy, however, has been avoided. Believing that error is most effectually overthrown by the establishment of truth, we have sought to gather into a focus some of the scattered

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rays which shine from the Inspired Record ; and thus to exhibit the sanctification of the believer in the only light in which it can be rightly apprehended and understood. We trust that our aim may be appreciated, and that the thoughtful reader may see that, if the Word of God does not warrant him to hope that he may live a sinless life on earth, it yet arms him with the weapons, and clothes him with the armour, in which he may live a sin-conquering life, overcoming in every conflict through “grace, made sufficient for him, and strength perfected in his weakness.”





# SANCTIFICATION,

AS EXHIBITED IN THE WORD OF GOD.

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ONE Being only has appeared during the course of human history regarding whom it may be affirmed that He was perfectly, essentially holy and pure. Jesus Christ stands forth alone among men as THE SINLESS ONE. Not the slightest trace of that selfishness which is more or less inherent in all other men showed itself in Him. He not only “did no sin,”<sup>1</sup> He “knew no sin.”<sup>2</sup> With a nature most keenly sensitive to the presence and defilement of evil, He yet never had any knowledge of it as defiling Himself. A perfect pattern of truthfulness and humility, He yet never confessed sin; never

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter ii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

prayed for its forgiveness ; never asked deliverance from its power ; never showed any consciousness of moral infirmity or imperfection as attaching to Himself. On the other hand, His will dwelt so enshrined in the will of the Father that He could say, "I and my Father are one."<sup>1</sup> "I do always those things that please Him."<sup>2</sup> "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."<sup>3</sup>

Though exposed to temptation—for He "suffered being tempted,"<sup>4</sup> and in sore conflict "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears"<sup>5</sup>—yet the seeds of evil found no soil in His nature in which they could take root and grow. Though living among sinners, in a sinful world, like a pure beam of sunlight, He passed through it undefiled. His heart and conscience, His memory and imagination, contracted no stain. Hence, when the prince of this world came, he found nothing in Him<sup>6</sup>—no weak point which he might successfully assail, no sinful principle to which he might successfully appeal. He could

<sup>1</sup> John x. 30.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> John iv. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. ii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. v. 7.

<sup>6</sup> John xiv. 30.

freely address to His adversaries the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"<sup>1</sup>

Thus it must have been. How could the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, have been otherwise than pure? Did not the Father Himself testify regarding Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" He who was manifested to take away our sins, must Himself have had no sin.<sup>2</sup>

The sinlessness of Jesus was testified to by His disciples. Conscious of evil and imperfection in themselves, they all bore most willing, emphatic testimony to the perfect purity of their Lord. To them He was "the Holy One and the Just;"<sup>3</sup> the "Lamb without blemish and without spot;"<sup>4</sup> the High-Priest "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;"<sup>5</sup> "He that is holy."<sup>6</sup> Judas, who had most favourable opportunities of judging, acknowledged that, in betraying Jesus, he had "betrayed the innocent blood;"<sup>7</sup> and when Pilate, contrary to the remonstrance of his wife, "Have thou nothing to do with that just

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter i. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. vii. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. iii. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvii. 4.

man,"<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, yielding to the clamour of the Jewish rulers, delivered Him to be crucified, "He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."<sup>2</sup> The Christian church, in every age of the world since, without one dissentient voice, has re-echoed this testimony; and so also in these days, to a large extent, does the world. It is not going too far to say that any wanton attempt to defame the character of Jesus would be resented by society at large as an insult to humanity itself. Even infidelity and unbelief can point to no blot in the character of our Lord. Every attempt to prove sin against Him has but made His holiness shine forth more conspicuously bright. Very remarkable are the words left on record by the late John Stuart Mill, generally supposed by his admirers to have been bitterly hostile to Christianity. Toward the close of a long life, spent in metaphysical and moral speculation, and philosophical research, he wrote as follows: "Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue, from the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 24.

abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." The challenge of our Lord, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" thus remains unanswered and unanswerable to the present day.

It will be freely admitted that, in this respect, Jesus Christ stands alone. Perfect innocence and sinlessness have never been claimed on behalf of any of His people; nor, indeed, on behalf of any one of the human race.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ alone excepted, "all have sinned."<sup>2</sup> All Christians freely acknowledge this much regarding themselves. All of them have more or less felt their nature to be tainted and defiled by evil. They have confessed their transgressions of heart and life, and sought Divine forgiveness. All of them have had to contend with indwelling sin, as well as with outward temptation, and have struggled after inward purity and victory.

Thus, while Scripture, and the well-nigh universally-concurring sentiment of all in a position to form a correct judgment on the point, testify to the sinlessness and moral perfection of

<sup>1</sup> The Romish dogma of "the immaculate conception of the Virgin," unsustained as it is by even a solitary proof from Scripture, can hardly be regarded as presenting an exception to this remark.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 23.

Jesus, they testify yet more unequivocally to the imperfection and sinfulness of man.

But is man to bear about with him for ever this sore burden of moral imperfection? Is there no redemption for him from the degrading bondage of evil? Created at first in the image and likeness of God, may not his nature be so purged from defilement as to become capable of bearing this image anew?

Such is the very end proposed by the work of Christ. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."<sup>1</sup> Believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son;<sup>2</sup> they are to be without fault before His throne.<sup>3</sup> "We know," says St. John, "that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."<sup>4</sup>

But these and similar expressions point, not to the present, but to the ultimate condition of believers, when Christ's redeeming work will be

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 25 27.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiv 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

complete ; when the church, “ builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,”<sup>1</sup> shall be so filled with the Divine presence, and inspired by Divine love, that God will be all in all.<sup>2</sup> Then, indeed, there shall not only be no sin in God’s people, but no possibility of sin. Then “ His servants shall serve Him ; and they shall see His face ; and His name shall be in their foreheads. . . . And they shall reign for ever and ever.”<sup>3</sup>

But what of the condition in this life of those for whom this inheritance of moral glory is in reserve ? If it cannot be true of any of them that they have never sinned, may it not, at least, become true of some of them that they have ceased to sin ? Is not perfect holiness—full and complete sanctification, deliverance from every stain and trace of evil—attainable on earth ? May not the church contain Christians in whom what the Apostle Paul calls “ the flesh ” has, both in branch and root, been so utterly destroyed that no noxious outgrowth can possibly spring from it ? In short, may not He who has begun a good work in His people, have even already so perfected that work in some of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 22.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 28.      <sup>3</sup> Rev. xxii. 3-5.

them that they have become pure "as He is pure,"<sup>1</sup> reflecting His image in unsullied brightness, and absolutely without spot, and blameless before Him?

In seeking an answer to this question, our appeal must of course be to the Word of God, and not to the testimony or experience of any of His people, however highly esteemed for knowledge and holiness they may be. The most advanced Christians are but fallible and erring men. They know themselves but imperfectly, and may mistake temporary frames and feelings for fixed and permanent character. Have not some, who had climbed to the giddy heights of an imaginary spiritual perfection, been seen to fall like lightning from those heights into a fearful pit, and into miry clay, thus giving sad and sorrowful emphasis to the apostolic admonition, "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall?" "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."<sup>2</sup>

A careful examination of the teaching of Scripture on this point will show that, however

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. viii. 20.

great may have been the attainments of some in holiness, in no case is the work of sanctification perfectly accomplished in the believer during the present life. Justification, indeed, the pardon and acceptance of the penitent transgressor, is an act which is completed at once. The moment he believes on Jesus he has "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."<sup>1</sup> But the perfecting of him in holiness, the bringing of his will into harmony with the Divine will, the cleansing of his nature from every trace of the presence and defilement of evil, this is a progressive work, begun in him by the Spirit of God as soon as he accepts Christ; carried on in him, it may be, amid many interruptions while he abides in the flesh, and at length perfected in the day of Christ, in his being presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."<sup>2</sup>

It is well to bear in mind, in connection with this subject, that, throughout His Word, God is represented as essentially, supremely holy—the holiness even of the sinless and pure among His creatures being, to their own consciousness, but the dimmest reflection of His infinite and ineff-

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jude 24.

able brightness. He is often styled "THE HOLY ONE," and "THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL," as if, in comparison with creatures, He alone were holy. Isaiah tells us of the seraphim he saw in vision before the throne, veiling their faces with their wings as they cried one unto another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." A similar scene is represented in Rev. iv. 8. In Rev. xv. 4, those who have "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image," and who stand on the sea of glass, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, exclaim, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy!" Under the inspiration of a similar consciousness, St. John writes, "This, is the message which we have heard of Him, . . . that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;"<sup>1</sup> while St. Paul represents Him as "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."<sup>2</sup>

Thus God alone is necessarily and essentially holy, the Son in this respect being "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person,"<sup>3</sup> and the Spirit being the Spirit of

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 5.                      <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i. 3.

holiness, and the author and source of all holiness in the creature. The holiness of creatures is not essential to them; they may fall and become unholy; their holiness is derived and dependent, and is the result of their being in union with God through the Spirit. Man is holy only in so far as, through the indwelling Spirit, his mind is enlightened and his heart renewed by Divine truth, and his will governed by its dictates. However high, therefore, his attainments in holiness may hereafter become, he must ever remain conscious, like the veiled seraphim, that he comes infinitely short of the holiness of God.

We should bear in mind, also, the dark though truthful colours in which unregenerate man is exhibited to us in Scripture. The law given by God for the government of His rational creatures may be summed up in the word LOVE—love fixed supremely on God, as being infinitely worthy of it, and flowing out in disinterested benevolence toward others. This law is a transcript of the Divine Nature, and is “holy, and just, and good.”<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt as to its rectitude and reasonableness, and tendency to promote human welfare.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 12.

Yet, everywhere, the life of fallen man is one perpetual violation of it. The whole past history of our race but too clearly proves that "the carnal (unrenewed) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."<sup>1</sup> "The law is spiritual," says St. Paul; "but I am carnal, sold under sin. . . . I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."<sup>2</sup> The Psalmist traces all the sad sin of which he had been guilty to this inherent defect of his nature: "Behold (says he), I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me:"<sup>3</sup> and says the prophet Jeremiah, in words which find an echo wherever man exists, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."<sup>4</sup> In his unrenewed state, man is described as "sensual, having not the Spirit;"<sup>5</sup> as "dead in trespasses and sins," as under the dominion of "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,"<sup>6</sup> as loving darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.<sup>7</sup> How terrible the desolations that sin has

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 7.<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 14, 18.<sup>3</sup> Psa. li. 5.<sup>4</sup> Jer. xvii. 9.<sup>5</sup> Jude 19.<sup>6</sup> Eph. ii. 1, 2.<sup>7</sup> John iii. 19.

wrought in the earth! Universal obedience to the law of love would have rendered our world a paradise of loveliness, with peace among its varied populations, and the voice of rejoicing and salvation in all its dwellings. Selfishness, which is but another name for sin, has turned it into an arena of strife, filled it with crime and wretchedness, and covered it with graves.

It is, however, on man, thus fallen and sinful, that the Spirit is to exert His sanctifying power, changing his darkness into light and his heart of stone to flesh, and renewing his disordered, stubborn will; thus leading him, in the exercise of faith and penitence, to the cross, that he may enter into a covenant of reconciliation and peace with the God against whom he has rebelled, yielding himself to be henceforth a loyal and loving subject of His reign.

But the question now before us is, What does Scripture teach as to the extent to which the work of the Spirit may be carried on in man during the present life? Does it teach that the evil nature which he inherits may be so utterly destroyed in him that, even in the eye of Holy Omniscience, he shall be perfectly sinless and pure?

It must not for one moment be supposed that we question the possibility of very lofty attainments in holiness being made by the Christian, far less that he is under the most solemn and urgent obligation to seek such attainments. The words of our Lord are sufficiently decisive on this point: "Be ye therefore perfect,<sup>1</sup> even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."<sup>2</sup> But is such perfection attainable by us on earth? Sinless, stainless holiness is doubtless one of the elements of the Divine perfection. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in addressing his students on one occasion, used words like these: "Gentlemen, remember that, while you are ever to be striving after perfection in art, you must die without having attained it." Is it not just so in regard to that perfection urged on us by our

<sup>1</sup> For an exposition of the different senses in which such terms as "perfect," "perfection," etc., are used in Scripture, we beg to refer the reader to a tract by Canon Miller, entitled *Christian Perfection*, recently published by the Religious Tract Society. We merely remark that these terms are never employed in Scripture to describe that sinless holiness to which every believer will eventually attain. Even the expression in 2 Cor. vii. 1, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," to which we refer farther on, is no exception to this remark.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 48.

Lord? Is it not a perfection which we are to be ever aiming at, though never reaching, just as we may be ever growing in knowledge, though never possessing the fulness of it as it exists in God? Nay; we may ask, Is such perfection, regarding it in its highest sense—our being robed in holiness equal to that of God—attainable even in heaven? Have the seraphim, who veil their faces with their wings as they cry, “Holy, holy, holy,” attained it? Have the saints attained it, who have gotten the victory over sin and Satan, and who, having the harps of God, exclaim, “Thou only art holy!” “Behold, He putteth no trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight;”<sup>1</sup> and “His angels He charged with folly.”<sup>2</sup>

The root-idea of the word *sanctification* and its cognate terms is, unquestionably, separation from common occupations and uses, in order to consecration to God. In the Old Testament the word is often used in a merely external sense, not necessarily implying any renewal of the heart.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in Egypt, Moses was commanded to sanctify unto God all the first-born among

<sup>1</sup> Job xv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Job iv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> So also 1 Cor. vii. 14.

the children of Israel,<sup>1</sup> and afterwards, at the foot of Mount Sinai, to sanctify the entire people.<sup>2</sup> After the giving of the law they were sanctified again, when "Moses took the blood" of the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, "and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."<sup>3</sup> By similar rites Aaron and his sons were sanctified to minister unto the Lord in the priest's office.<sup>4</sup> But this sanctification was merely outward and typical, implying that the subjects of it were separated from the people of the world and set apart for God, and reminding them of their need of the inward sanctification of the heart. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians," said the Lord to them, "and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey MY voice indeed, and keep MY covenant, . . . ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."<sup>5</sup> In this case, they would have been doubly sanctified. While sanctified out-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xiii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xix.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxiv. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xxix. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xix. 4-6.

wardly and set apart for God, they would also have been sanctified inwardly, and have gladly given themselves to His service.

In a similar sense the word is applied to external objects which were set apart for the Divine service. Thus the children of Israel were commanded to sanctify the Sabbath day; <sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, to devote it to the worship and service of God. Moses was commanded to sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the ark of the testimony, and all the various instruments and vessels and furniture used in connection with the worship of God.<sup>2</sup> Though in themselves possessing no moral quality, and incapable of such quality, they were nevertheless regarded as things sacred to God, and could be used only in His service.

In Matt. xxiii. 17, 19, our Lord speaks of "the temple that sanctifieth the gold," and of "the altar that sanctifieth the gift." To

<sup>1</sup> Deut. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxx. Among heathen nations a similar use of the word prevailed. Not only were their temples and altars regarded as holy or sacred, but also the priests who ministered in them, the sacrifices they offered, and all the various vestments, instruments, furniture, etc., connected with their worship.

employ for common or profane purposes what was thus sanctified, and therefore belonged to God, involved the crime of sacrilege. It was when Belshazzar "commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein," to the praise of their idol gods, that there came forth, in the same hour, the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote on the palace wall those mysterious characters which announced Belshazzar's doom.<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament, as applied to Christians, the word is never used in a merely external sense, but always implies real, inward, spiritual change in the subjects of it. It seems generally to carry along with it the double meaning of consecration to God and inward progressive purification; in some passages the latter, and in others the former idea being the more prominent.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, as might be expected from the forms of thought and expression peculiar to that people, consecration is the

<sup>1</sup> Dan. v. 2, 3.

more prominent idea; Christ is the Sanctifier,<sup>1</sup> and His blood the medium through which the sanctification is effected. In Heb. xiii. 11, 12, after a reference to the fact that "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin, are burned without the camp," it is added, "wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." As "the Lamb of God," the great sin-bearer, on whom were "laid the iniquities of us all," He was led forth from the holy city, and crucified on Calvary. He thus bore our sins in His own body on the tree.<sup>2</sup> In this sacrifice God is well pleased. By its atoning blood, applied by faith to those who believe, accompanied, as this always is, by the anointing and renewing of the Holy Spirit, they are marked out as God's peculiar people, and consecrated to His service.

The same view of sanctification appears in

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 11. On the expression in this verse, "both He that sanctifieth and they which are sanctified," Dean Alford remarks that the term *sanctify*, as here employed, "involves that transforming and consecrating process of which His Spirit is the actual agent." For the reasons stated, we regard the "consecrating process" as being here the more prominent idea.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 24.

Heb. x. 10, 14, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Here the sanctified are those who, by the application to them of the blood of Christ's sacrifice, are consecrated to God. This is strikingly shown in the application of the same term, in verse 29, to the apostate, who is said to have "counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." It is not necessary that we should suppose the character here specified to have been really "born of God," and therefore inwardly sanctified and renewed. In Scripture men are generally spoken of according to their profession and outward appearance. In writing to the churches, the apostles addressed the members of them as "elect," "faithful," "saints," etc., though there were doubtless among them stony-ground hearers, who, though at first receiving the word with joy, yet having no root in themselves, in time of temptation fell away.<sup>1</sup>

But in what sense are those thus "sanctified"

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

and set apart for God by the blood of Jesus, "perfected for ever?" A reference to the opening verses of the chapter will make this clear. In the first verse it is said that, "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." The law, with its sacrifices, could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,<sup>1</sup> inasmuch as it could neither relieve him from the painful sense of guilt, nor bring him into conscious reconciliation and peace with God. Every time he came to the altar shedding fresh blood, sin was brought anew to his remembrance. Nor had the worshippers, through those sacrifices, power to conquer sin. Iniquities prevailed against them.

But what the law, with the blood of bulls and of goats, could not effect, was accomplished by the offering of Jesus on the cross, once for all, in the body which the Father had prepared for Him, and in obedience to the Father's will. A satisfactory basis was thus laid for free and full forgiveness, and for the effectual purification of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 9.

the heart and life from sin. Those whom, in this sense, the law could not "make perfect," were "perfected for ever" by the gospel. Hence, in the verses that immediately follow, we are reminded of the new covenant relation with God into which believers are introduced by virtue of Christ's blood: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."<sup>1</sup> And now the believer, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and having God's law of love written by the Holy Spirit in his heart, possesses a richer sanctification than that of Aaron, and is a member of a holier priesthood. This is strikingly set forth in the words that follow: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High-Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."<sup>2</sup>

It thus appears that the sanctification referred

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 19-22.

to in this epistle is equivalent to consecration, while it implies inward renewal and holiness. It is effected when the sinner, believing on Jesus, is "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."<sup>1</sup> He is thus separated from the world, and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints, and a member of the household of God.<sup>2</sup>

The word seems to be used in a similar sense in Rom. xv. 16, where St. Paul speaks of "ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." When, in the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles by Peter, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."<sup>3</sup> By this "unction from the Holy One," they were "sanctified;" the "good work" was begun in them; they were sealed as belonging to God, and consecrated to His service.

A similar idea appears when, in Jude 1, believers are addressed as "sanctified by God the Father," and in 1 Cor. i. 2, as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and probably also in 1 Cor. vi. 11, when the apostle, after having referred to some of the worst kinds of character, added, "And such

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x. 44.

were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." So also in 2 Tim. ii. 21, where the faithful servant of Christ is styled, "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." The use of the past tense in these passages seems to intimate that the sanctification referred to was a work already accomplished. The prime element in this sanctification therefore was not "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," though this renewing invariably accompanied it; it was rather the separating of the believer from the world and the setting of him apart for God, so that he became a sacred person, and was "called to be a saint."<sup>1</sup>

The term *saints*, coming from the same root, and meaning sanctified, and therefore sacred persons, may also be referred to. In the Old Testament, it is applied to the pious or godly because of their character, and to the entire Jewish people because of their consecration to God. In

<sup>1</sup> It should be observed that, in John xvii. 19, as applied by our Lord to Himself, "sanctify" bears the meaning of consecrate. In no other sense than that of *consecration*, was *sanctification* possible to our Lord. See also John x. 36.

the latter case the word, elsewhere rendered *saints*, is translated *holy*. It is the usual designation of Christians in the New Testament. St. Paul addresses believers at Rome and Corinth as "called to be saints." His epistles to the churches at Ephesus, Colosse, etc., are addressed "to the saints" at those places. To the apostle all believers were "saints." It was not till long after apostolic times that the term was restricted in its application to such as were supposed to excel in holiness and in devotedness to the service of Christ. It has no such meaning in the New Testament. There it is the designation of all believers, just because all of them alike, having been "sealed with the Holy Spirit," had been thus separated from the world, and consecrated to God. That a peculiar sacredness is regarded in the New Testament as attaching to Christians, is evident from the whole tenor of the language employed regarding them. Consecrated to God as they were, their sins were no common sins, but involved guilt of deepest and most flagrant dye. "Know ye not," said the apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God,

him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”<sup>1</sup> Here it is clearly intimated that wilful and deliberate sin in believers is equivalent to the defiling of a temple consecrated to God and hallowed by His presence. See also Heb. x. 26–31.

It is abundantly obvious that, in the instances above referred to, the sanctified were not sinless. But we shall have occasion to return to this point farther on.

We may now look at those passages in the New Testament in which the terms in question are applied to Christians ; the idea of consecration being implied, but that of inward progressive purification being the more prominent.

The prayer of our Lord for His disciples first requires attention : “Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth.”<sup>2</sup> The disciples at this time were unquestionably renewed and sanctified men. They had forsaken all and followed Jesus. Jesus Himself had just acknowledged them as branches in union with Himself, the true vine.<sup>3</sup> But their sanctification—their deliverance from the power of indwelling sin—was far from being complete. Only a few

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> John xv. 5.

hours before, there had been "a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest;"<sup>1</sup> and Jesus had solemnly warned them, "All ye shall be offended because of ME this night."<sup>2</sup> He therefore prays for them that, through the influence of the truth which He had taught them, and which they had received, they might be more thoroughly sanctified, and thus fitted for the work to which He had called them.

What an answer was given to this prayer in the outpouring of the Spirit on them on the day of Pentecost! Yet, even then, though "filled with the Holy Ghost,"<sup>3</sup> their sanctification was not complete. This appears in the case of Peter, whom long after Paul "withstood to the face" at Antioch, because of his vacillation and inconsistency regarding matters then in dispute between the Jewish and Gentile converts.<sup>4</sup> But He who had begun a good work in Peter carried that work on. How ripened and mellowed does the character of this apostle appear in the two epistles written by him towards the close of life. The earthly

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 24.<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 27.<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 4.<sup>4</sup> See Gal. ii. 11, 12.

fire and glare of his earlier years are all gone. He is clothed with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and seems waiting ready for His appearing.

We can discern the same advance of character in John. In the Gospels, he and his brother James appear as "the sons of thunder,"<sup>1</sup> eager to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan villagers who were unwilling to receive their Lord.<sup>2</sup> In his epistles, John is pre-eminently the apostle of love. The same zeal indeed still burns in his breast, but it is tempered and purified by long-maintained fellowship with Christ. So doubtless it was also with the other disciples, though the scanty records left us regarding their apostolic lives do not enable us so clearly to trace it. The prayer of their Lord on behalf of each of them was richly answered in the end: "Sanctify them through Thy truth."

In Acts xx. 32, the Apostle Paul, in his address to the elders of the Ephesian church, commends them to God and to the word of His grace, which was able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 54.

who are *sanctified*. By the "sanctified" it is clear that he refers here, not to the partially sanctified on earth, but to the perfectly sanctified in heaven. Among the former these elders had already an inheritance. They had been counted faithful, and had been put into the ministry, "the Holy Ghost having made them overseers" of the flock at Ephesus. But their sanctification was not complete. "Building up," like "growing up," is a gradual process, necessarily passing through successive stages. For this "building up" the apostle "commended them to God and to the word of His grace."<sup>1</sup>

In writing to the Corinthians, after referring to their being "in Christ Jesus," the apostle adds, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."<sup>2</sup> The Greek word here rendered "sanctification" occurs in several other passages, in nearly all of which it is translated *holiness*. So probably it should be rendered here. Christ had been made unto them "holiness," *i.e.*, the source of holiness; just as He had been made to them the source of "righteousness" and of "redemption." The expression does not imply

<sup>1</sup> See also Acts xxvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

that the holiness of Christ had been imputed to them. As well might it be maintained that, because Christ is said to have been made "wisdom" to them, His wisdom had been imputed to them, which would be both false and absurd. The apostle means that as in Christ full provision had been made for their justification, and also, eventually, for their complete redemption, so also, in Christ, full provision had been made for their sanctification—their being eventually perfected in holiness and presented faultless before God. That no one of them had then been perfected in holiness is evident from such exhortations as the following, addressed indiscriminately to them all: "So run, that ye may obtain."<sup>1</sup> "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."<sup>2</sup> "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."<sup>3</sup> "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."<sup>4</sup>

This last passage is sometimes quoted as showing that sinless perfection is attainable by Christians during this present life. It is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 24.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.

evident, however, that the apostle here uses the word "cleansing"—"let us cleanse ourselves"—not in reference to an act which is completed at once, but in reference to a work which is carried on gradually till finished. The same remark is applicable to the expression, "perfecting holiness." The Greek verb used here means "to carry on to completion," and perfecting, like growing, is a gradually advancing process. It should also be observed that the apostle includes himself among those to whom the exhortation is applicable: "Let us cleanse ourselves, . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" thus showing that, up to the time when he wrote, he did not regard the "cleansing" or the "perfecting" as accomplished regarding himself. Moreover, if in the case of any this work were accomplished during this present life, then a time would come when they might cease to cleanse themselves, there being no longer anything to cleanse away; when they might cease from "perfecting holiness," holiness having been perfectly attained. It is evident, however, from the language employed, that the apostle did not consider that either he himself, or any of the

Corinthians had then advanced so far. What proof is there that during this life any one of them, or any New Testament saint whatever, had cleansed all sin away from his nature and become perfected in holiness and love?

The words of the apostle in Eph. v. 25-27, have been already quoted: "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The thought of the apostle here is evidently that suggested by our Lord's prayer for His disciples, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." Here also, therefore, the sanctification must be a gradual work, carried on continuously till the Bride of Christ—the Church—purified from every taint, and cleansed from every stain, and shining resplendent in the beauties of holiness, rises to be with Him where He is, to behold His glory, and to reflect its brightness for ever.

The Thessalonian believers, to whom the apostle addressed the two earliest of his epistles, had been the subjects of sanctifying grace. God had from the beginning chosen them to

“salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,”<sup>1</sup> the “salvation,” as explained in the following verse, being the “obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, as the fulness of that glory could be obtained by them only in heaven, and as its chief element unquestionably is the sinless, spotless purity of Christ, it is clearly implied that the sanctifying work of the Spirit must be carried on in them till they reached that blissful state.

That work had been already begun. “Our gospel,” says the apostle to them, “came unto you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance . . . so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”<sup>2</sup> The Thessalonian Christians thus stood high in the confidence and esteem of the apostle. Their consecration to Christ seems to have been very complete, their devotedness to His cause all that could be desired; but that the apostle did not regard them as having been perfected in holiness is evident from the exhortations which he addresses to them throughout the epistle, and especially

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. i. 5-7.

from the prayer which he offers for their further sanctification in 1 Thess. v. 23 : "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This prayer should be considered in connection with the preceding verses,<sup>1</sup> in which the apostle had addressed to them sundry exhortations, tending to a fuller sanctification of heart and life, and hence to deeper and richer communion and fellowship with God as the "God of peace." Exhortations on other points had been addressed to them in previous parts of the epistle. But had every duty been specified ? Had nothing been omitted ? Were there not other points on which they needed counsel and admonition ? And, besides, were they able to work out this fuller sanctification for themselves ? Must it not be the result of "God working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure ?"

Some such thought seems to have arisen in the mind of the apostle, after the counsels he had addressed to them ; and hence his sudden

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 14-22.

change from the language of admonition to that of prayer. "But the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly;" *i.e.* in every respect; sanctify you in all your feelings, desires, aims, and motives; sanctify you in all the intercourse, and businesses, and relationships of life: "and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body," your entire being, through all its powers and faculties, "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." But was this a prayer that they might be made sinlessly holy and pure in this life? It seems clear that to the mind of the apostle, being "blameless" was not equivalent to being sinlessly pure. In this same epistle he claims blamelessness for himself,<sup>1</sup> but he nowhere claims sinless holiness. Our Lord was sinlessly pure as well as blameless, but where, throughout Scripture, is such a thing affirmed of any one of His people?

Besides, the prayer itself that they might be "*preserved* blameless," implies that there was evil both around them and within them, from which it was needful they should be kept. The sinless Saviour needed not to be kept, but His disciples did. Hence He says: "I pray not

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 10.

that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”<sup>1</sup> So with all Christians. If they are to be presented “blameless,” they must be “preserved blameless.” The apostle felt this to be true as regarded himself. Among the last words left on record as having come from his pen, we have these: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.” We know that he did not expect to be delivered from death; but he was confident that he would be preserved from unholy feelings, from unworthy fears, and especially from apostacy. Such words as he uses are suitable for such as know themselves to be sinful and liable to fall; but we cannot conceive of them as coming from the lips of the holy Jesus, or from saints who, having overcome, are set down with Him on His throne.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the Thessalonians themselves, so far as may be gathered from the second epistle to them, it appears that while the apostle’s prayer for them had been answered in the sense in which it is explained above, it had not been answered by any of them having

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 21.

become sinlessly pure. Thanks are given to God for their advance in Christian character: "Your faith (says the apostle) groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."<sup>1</sup> But he exhorts them not to be "weary in well-doing;"<sup>2</sup> he prays that the Lord would "direct their hearts into the love of God," and expresses his confidence that He would "keep them from evil."<sup>3</sup> The sanctification of the Thessalonians, so far as we can trace it, was certainly progressive.

As might be expected—for the apostle did not teach to one church truth which he withheld from another—this prayer for the Thessalonians, taken in connection with the exhortations addressed to them, will be found very nearly equivalent to the prayerful confidence which he expresses regarding the Christians at Philippi, that He who had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,<sup>4</sup> taken along with the injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 5, 13.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. i. 6.

in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”<sup>1</sup> The “good work” referred to as begun in them, was doubtless the work of sanctifying grace. The Greek word translated “perform,”—“perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,”—means, to carry on to completion. The same word is used in the expression “perfecting holiness,” in 2 Cor. vii. 1, already referred to. It is a word that would be used, not in reference to a work completed at once, like a coin struck from a die; but to a work carried on gradually till finished, like a painting or engraving, which is touched and retouched till the desired perfection is attained. It is thus clear that the apostle regarded the sanctification of the Philippian believers as a work that would be carried on in them during life, but completed only on their entrance into glory.

This sanctification, which in Phil. ii. 12, is called “salvation,” the Philippians are exhorted to “work out with fear and trembling,” and to this they are encouraged by the assurance, “God worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” They had there-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 12, 13.

fore but to work along with God in faith and patience, and the good work begun in them would be carried on till it was perfected in the day of Christ. Were the Thessalonians led by the apostle's prayer for them to look for more than this? Would not the desires and expectations and spiritual activity which his prayer stirred in the church at Thessalonica, be perfectly in accordance with those which his words of encouragement stirred among the Philip-pians?

The Apostle Peter describes the strangers to whom he addressed his first epistle as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Their obedience as Christ's people was the result of the indwelling Spirit purifying their hearts from sin, and was accompanied by the continual application to them, through faith, of Christ's atoning blood, cleansing their consciences from a sense of guilt, and enabling them to draw near to God, and engage in His service. That the apostle did not regard any of those whom he believed to possess this "sanctification

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 2.

of the Spirit" as perfected in holiness, is evident from his exhorting them: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"<sup>1</sup> "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."<sup>2</sup>

It thus appears that the terms "sanctify," "sanctification," "saints," etc., as applied to Christians in the New Testament, imply their being anointed with the Holy Spirit, their being thus separated from the world, consecrated to God, and fitted for His service; and that the offering of the body of Jesus on the cross, once for all, in obedience to the will of the Father, is the basis on which this sanctification, and the sinless perfection in which it will eventually result are secured. It also appears that there is nothing in the terms themselves, or in the use that is made of them in Scripture, to warrant the belief that any of those to whom they are applied attained to sinless perfection during this present life. On the other hand, the exhortations addressed to them clearly imply that they were morally imperfect, compassed with

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 1, 2.

infirmity and liable to fall, and had need therefore to take unto them the whole armour of God, that they might be able to withstand in the evil day.<sup>1</sup>

Several passages in St. John's first epistle have an important bearing on our subject, and must not be overlooked. "Whosoever abideth in Him (Christ) sinneth not:" "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."<sup>2</sup> These words must not be robbed of any portion of their meaning and force. But it should be borne in mind, that, whatever they affirm, they affirm not regarding *some* Christians merely, distinguished from others by their attainments in holiness; but regarding *all* Christians, whatever their attainments may be. In the sense in which the apostle meant it, it must be true of every believer that he "sinneth not," and "cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Then, besides, to be rightly understood, these statements must be explained in harmony with other statements in the same epistle. In 1 John i. 8, the apostle declares—and he in-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 13.      <sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 6, 9; v. 18.

cludes himself in the declaration—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The Christian has still a sinful nature, and if he so far forget himself, and lose his hold on Christ, as to yield to his sinful nature, he is at once overcome. In such a case there is a remedy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."<sup>1</sup> The same sentiment is repeated in 1 John ii. 1, 2. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Here again it is clearly intimated that the believer may fall into sin, but that in this case there is a remedy. And such is the teaching of the Word of God throughout.

What then does the apostle mean when he affirms, "He that abideth in Him sinneth not?" The latter part of the verse will be found to throw light on the former: "He that

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 9.

sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." Now, as the expression, "he that sinneth," points to the *habitual* sinner—to one who willingly lives under the power and dominion of sin; so the expression, "he that . . . sinneth not," must point to one who, though he may at times be overcome by temptation, is yet *not* a habitual sinner, but is in heart opposed to sin.

Again; when, in 1 John iii. 7, describing the believer, the apostle says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous," and in verse 8, describing the sinner, he adds, "He that committeth sin is of the devil," it is perfectly clear that he is referring, not to isolated acts of righteousness or of sin, but to the habitual character and daily life of the individual. As occasional acts of righteousness, reluctantly performed, cannot stamp a wicked man as a Christian; so occasional acts of sin, into which a Christian may be betrayed, but which his heart abhors and resists, cannot stamp him as having become a child of the devil. To suppose that the apostle means to affirm, by the expressions in question, that a child of God never sins, and cannot sin, is to suppose that he contradicts the testimony of God's Word

throughout, the facts of Scripture biography, and even those of his own experience. Scott well remarks, in his comment on 1 John iii. 10, "As 'doing righteousness' means not a single action, but habitual obedience to God; 'committing sin' (it is the same verb in the original) cannot properly signify merely a single act of sin, but habitual disobedience in some particular at least."

It is very evident that, in this portion of 1 John iii., the apostle is drawing a contrast between "the children of God" and "the children of the devil." In the latter sin reigns, and reigns unto death; in the former sin does not reign, and cannot reign. They may indeed be overcome at times by temptation. They will be unable to say, during this earthly life, "We have no sin;" but that they should "continue in sin;" that they should allow "sin to reign in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof"<sup>1</sup>—this the apostle declares to be an impossibility: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." In short, while the believer abides in

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 12.

conscious, living, loving union with Christ, "that wicked one toucheth him not."<sup>1</sup> Wilful, deliberate sin, and continuance in sin, are alike impossible to him. Abiding in Christ by faith, and with Christ abiding in him by His Spirit, he will be victorious in every conflict. "Ye are of God, little children," says the apostle, "and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."<sup>2</sup> Thus to overcome sin by abiding in Christ should be the rule of the Christian's life; to be overcome by sin the rare exception.

It may be well here to call attention to the fact that, of the holy and devoted men, the record of whose experience is given us in the Word of God, we find no one who, to his own consciousness, had come up to the standard of perfection. We see most of the Old Testament saints falling into open transgression. Their short-comings and sins stand out in melancholy prominence in the history of their lives. Those of them who in this respect were exceptions, knew themselves to be no exceptions to the declaration, "There is none righteous; no, not one."<sup>3</sup> We have the Divine testimony regarding

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 10.

Job that he was a “perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil;”<sup>1</sup> but Job’s own confession regarding himself was, “Behold, I am vile.”<sup>2</sup> “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”<sup>3</sup> The enemies of Daniel could find no occasion against him, except as concerning the law of his God;<sup>4</sup> but we find Daniel humbling himself before God, confessing his sin and the sin of his people Israel.<sup>5</sup> St. Paul freely acknowledged that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect.<sup>6</sup> “I know,” says he, “that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.”<sup>7</sup> “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”<sup>8</sup> St. James testifies, “In many things we offend all;”<sup>9</sup> and St. John says, in words already referred to, and from which, as he included himself in them, he would have excepted none, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in

<sup>1</sup> Job i. 8.<sup>2</sup> Job xl. 4.<sup>3</sup> Job xlii. 6.<sup>4</sup> Dan. vi. 5.<sup>5</sup> Dan. ix. 20.<sup>6</sup> Phil. iii. 12.<sup>7</sup> Rom. vii. 18.<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.<sup>9</sup> James iii. 2.

us.”<sup>1</sup> Everywhere throughout the epistles it is evident that those to whom they were addressed were not, in this respect, in advance of the apostles; that while there were among them varying degrees of Christian excellence and strength and elevation of character, they were all of them, without exception, “compassed with infirmity,” and liable to fall. There were none of them to whom the exhortation might not well be addressed, “Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”<sup>2</sup> Even Timothy, whom St. Paul eulogises as “his own son in the faith,” and commends for the “unfeigned faith that was in him,” is warned against evils through which some had “erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things. . . . Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

It is indeed true that, in writing to believers at Rome, the apostle sets before them very lofty attainments in holiness as their privilege. He

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 10-12.

speaks of them being "dead to sin,"<sup>1</sup> and of their old man as crucified with Christ, "that the body of sin might be destroyed." They are exhorted to "reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But the whole strain of the apostle's argument shows that he is referring to a state to which they were to aspire, rather than to one to which any of them had attained. If they had already attained, what means the exhortation so earnestly pressed on them, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof?" What means the remonstrance: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" And this style of exhortation is maintained throughout the epistle. Those whom the apostle speaks of as "dead to sin," and as planted together in the likeness of Christ's death,<sup>2</sup> he elsewhere exhorts to make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;<sup>3</sup> to "cast off the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 5, 6, 11, 12, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiii. 14.

works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.”<sup>1</sup> St. Paul had evidently no knowledge of the existence in the church at Rome, nor, indeed, in any other church, of Christians to whom such exhortations were inapplicable. On the other hand, he represents the best and holiest of them, those who along with himself had received “the first-fruits of the Spirit,” as groaning under the burden of present imperfection, and “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,”<sup>2</sup> when full salvation would be accomplished.

There are besides numerous passages in which, while the term “sanctification” in none of its forms occurs, it is clearly implied that the work of holiness in the Christian is progressive. Does he behold “as in a glass the glory of the Lord?” he is “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> Does he run a race? He is exhorted to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset him, and to run with patience the race that is set before him, looking unto Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Has the grace of God

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 1, 2.

that bringeth salvation appeared unto him? It teacheth him that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.<sup>1</sup> Does the Father of spirits chasten him? It is that he might be a partaker of His holiness.<sup>2</sup> Has he obtained "like precious faith" with apostles? He is to add to his faith fortitude; and to fortitude knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love.<sup>3</sup> Has he already received grace? He is to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> Does he cherish the hope of being with Christ, and of seeing Him as He is? He is to purify himself, "even as He is pure."<sup>5</sup> Has he, like a good soldier of Jesus Christ, been fighting the good fight of faith? He is reminded that the reward will be to "him that overcometh," and is exhorted to be faithful unto death, that he may receive the crown of life.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Titus ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter i. 5-7.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John iii. 2, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. ii. 10.

Such is a fair specimen of the prevailing strain of exhortation to the early churches. It shows the Christian life in those days to have been one of conflict; of struggle against indwelling sin; of warfare with outward temptation and difficulty. All throughout the trumpet sounds a martial strain. The soldiers of the cross are stirred from slumber, and called to arm for the combat. The battle must be fought continuously, for they wrestled not "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."<sup>1</sup> There was no discharge for any from that warfare. The bravest champions, who had already been made more than conquerors, were seen to be fighting still. Those who had run fastest and farthest, were still pressing earnestly on. He who said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,"<sup>2</sup> had at that very moment the consciousness that, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he was pressing toward the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

mark for "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

Human nature has not changed since apostolic times. The flesh has not been got rid of, nor has it developed into something less at enmity with God; nor have the foes which the Christian has to encounter changed in character. They show themselves, it may be, in different guise; but they are as numerous and powerful, as subtle and malignant, as ever. These certainly are not times in which the weapons of our warfare may be laid aside. Are there not in these days "false apostles, deceitful workers:" nay, Satan himself "transformed into an angel of light?"<sup>2</sup> Never, surely, was the apostolic admonition more needful than now, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."<sup>3</sup>

When we turn, from the scenes suggested by such exhortations as these, to the church of the redeemed in heaven, how changed does the aspect of everything become! We find ourselves in "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."<sup>4</sup> The holy city is

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 13.

lighted up with the glory of God and of the Lamb. Nothing that defileth can enter it.<sup>1</sup> No enemy appears: no traitor is lurking within its gates: no foe prowling about without. We hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them."<sup>2</sup> We see a great multitude, which no man can number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. We hear it said regarding them, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."<sup>3</sup> This assembly is not one gathered for labour or for

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 23, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 9-17.

conflict. It is made up of those who rest from their labours, and whose warfare is accomplished. We feel that such exhortations as those we have been pondering are not applicable to them. But they are applicable to us; suitable and salutary, in all their force and meaning, to ourselves.

We must not fail, before closing, to point out that, while the Christian life is necessarily one of warfare and conflict, it may also be one of rest in Christ, of peace with God, and of victory over sin. If the Christian cannot live a sinless life, he may yet live a sin-conquering life. If he dare not say, "I have no sin," he may be able to say, "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory" over sin. There is no reason why, in any conflict with evil, he should be overcome. Feeble in himself, it is his privilege to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."<sup>1</sup> Many and fierce may be the assaults made on his faith, but amid them all he can hear the voice of Jesus saying to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."<sup>2</sup> The fiery darts of the wicked one may be aimed at him in

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

constant showers, but, covered with the shield of faith, they touch him not; they fall harmless at his feet. In regard to every Christian duty—every demand made on his faith and love—he may be able to say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.”

To such a life of faith and victory over sin, the spirit of self-consecration and of close abiding in Christ is essentially necessary. To this we are constantly urged throughout the Word of God. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”<sup>1</sup> “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”<sup>2</sup> “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”<sup>3</sup> “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>4</sup> “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”<sup>5</sup> We may add

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 1.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.      <sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 11.      <sup>5</sup> 1 John v. 4.

that "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is more powerful than the law of sin in our members, and will make us free from its dominion.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot more appropriately close this brief treatise on the progressive character of sanctification than by very earnestly urging those who hold it to maintain it practically by being themselves living examples of its truth. If we cannot be sinlessly holy and pure in this present life—if such blessedness pertain rather to the glory hereafter to be revealed in us—yet let us be ever aiming at it. Let us not rest contented under sin's wretched, degrading yoke in any of its forms, but ever be taking on us the yoke of the meek and lowly Jesus,<sup>2</sup> following after "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Let us thus be journeying onward; toiling upward: for "the night is far spent, the day is at hand."<sup>4</sup>

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiii. 12.

have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”<sup>1</sup> “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 6, 7.      <sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 28.





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