

Revival and Reformation: Bible Sanctification

Scripture Reading:

Romans 12:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Introduction:

The scripture ever reminds the reader that the object in view is the full restoration of the individual into the family of God. Sacred history with its beautiful illustrations, paint the picture of the character of God in seeking the wayward child. This view is increasing unpopular in the majority of religious schools of thought.

Important Review

When Adam sinned both he and humanity in him were morally incapable of responding to God or as inspiration puts it "... it was impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape the pit of sin in which we are sunken." *Steps to Christ p.18.1, Genesis 3:6, 7; Romans 5:12.*

It was the Son of God Alone who could rescue man from his fallen condition and restore man to favor with God. How was it done?

Legal Justification

When the Son of God took on our humanity, that is the sinful fallen flesh and blood nature, He became the second Adam, the second representative man

who brought the power of the Holy Spirit back to fallen man in Himself. Let us read 1 Corinthians 15:22 and 1 Timothy 4:10

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

The work of the Second Adam completely reverses the fall of Adam and lifts mankind from the pit of sin to the very throne of God. But this is all and only in Christ. This gracious offer must be believed and accepted in order to be made real to the individual.

It is this gracious good news that leads to conversion and revival. God has in Christ fulfilled the demands of the broken law and through the life, sacrificial death, resurrection and high priestly ministry offers this wonderful salvation.

Justification by Faith

Justification by faith is the response or choice of the believer to accept all that God has done for the individual. Justification by faith accepts all that the second Adam has done on behalf of the sinner.

The righteousness of Christ covers the believer and as the individual walks by faith it also fills, transforming the character.

*1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.
3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:1-5

Abraham believed and it was counted to him for righteousness. It was all based on the promise of the second Adam and His redemptive work. One was done apart from the individual's choice while the other the individual must choose to receive the work already completed and allow the Holy Spirit to work that choice in by submission and living faith.

Sanctification

Sanctify means to make holy. Justification and Sanctification are both sides of the same coin. The righteousness of Christ justifies the penitent believer and the same righteousness of Christ sanctifies. It is all in Christ.

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. Romans 12:1, 2

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. 1

Thessalonians 5:23

Bible Sanctification

The Spirit of Prophecy uses the term "Bible Sanctification" very interestingly in relation to revival and reformation. There seems to be in the last days a departure from the principles of the word of God with either a righteousness by works or an emotional excitement that is called sanctification.

True sanctification is a Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonian church, declares, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." And he prays, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." [1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23.] The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is, and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." [John 17:17, 19.] And Paul teaches that believers are to be "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." [Romans 15:16.] What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told his disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." [John 16:13.] And the psalmist says, "Thy law is the truth." By the Word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in his law. And since the law of God is "holy, and just, and good," a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments." "I do always those things that please him." [John 15:10; 8:29.] The followers of Christ are to become like him,—by the grace of God, to form characters in harmony with the principles of his holy law. This is Bible sanctification. Great Controversy 1888 p. 469.1

Spurious Sanctification

The sanctification now gaining prominence in the religious world, carries with it a spirit of self-exaltation, and a disregard for the law of God, that mark it as foreign to the religion of the Bible. Its advocates teach that sanctification is an instantaneous work, by which, through faith alone, they attain to perfect holiness. "Only believe," say they, "and the blessing is yours." No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required. At the same time they deny the authority of the law of God, urging that they are released from obligation to keep the commandments. But is it possible for men to be holy, in accord with the will and character of God, without coming into harmony with the principles which are an expression of his nature and will, and which show what is well-pleasing to him?

The desire for an easy religion, that requires no striving, no self-denial, no divorce from the follies of the world, has made the doctrine of faith, and faith only, a popular doctrine; but what saith the Word of God? Says the apostle James: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." [James 2:14-24.]

The testimony of the Word of God is against this ensnaring doctrine of faith without works. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions upon which mercy is to be granted. It is presumption; for genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. Let

none deceive themselves with the belief that they can become holy while willfully violating one of God's requirements. The commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. "Sin is the transgression of the law." And "whosoever sinneth [transgresseth the law] hath not seen him, neither known him." [1 John 3:6.] Though John in his epistles dwells so fully upon love, yet he does not hesitate to reveal the true character of that class who claim to be sanctified while living in transgression of the law of God. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." [1 John 2:4, 5.]

Here is the test of every man's profession. We cannot accord holiness to any man without bringing him to the measurement of God's only standard of holiness in Heaven and in earth. If men feel no weight of the moral law, if they belittle and make light of God's precepts, if they break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, they shall be of no esteem in the sight of Heaven, and we may know that their claims are without foundation. And the claim to be without sin is, in itself, evidence that he who makes this claim is far from holy. It is because he has no true conception of the infinite purity and holiness of God, or of what they must become who shall be in harmony with his character; because he has no true conception of the purity and exalted loveliness of Jesus, and the malignity and evil of sin, that man can regard himself as holy. The greater the distance between himself and Christ, and the more inadequate his conceptions of the divine character and requirements, the more righteous he appears in his own eyes.

Reformation Based on the Word

Through Jesus the fallen sons of Adam become “sons of God.” “Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” [Hebrews 2:11.] The Christian’s life should be one of faith, of victory, and joy in God. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” [1 John 5:4.] Truly spake God’s servant Nehemiah, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” [Nehemiah 8:10.] And says Paul: “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice.” “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” [Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.]

Such are the fruits of Bible conversion and sanctification; and it is because the great principles of righteousness set forth in the law of God are so indifferently regarded by the Christian world, that these fruits are so rarely witnessed. This is why there is manifest so little of that deep, abiding work of the Spirit of God which marked revivals in former years. It is by beholding that we become changed. And as those sacred precepts in which God has opened to men the perfection and holiness of his character are neglected, and the minds of the people are attracted to human teachings and theories, what marvel that there has followed a decline of living piety in the church. Saith the Lord, “They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” [Jeremiah 2:3.] “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.... But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” [Psalm 1:1-3.]

It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among his professed people. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” [Jeremiah 6:16.] Great Controversy 1888 p. 477-478

In The Image of Christ

It is God’s will that steady growth be made unto perfection of character for His end-time people. When the character of Christ is fully revealed in His people He will come to claim them as His own.

Yours in the work of Revival and Reformation

Elder Ryan Griffith

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