

Sanctification and Christian Service

Our subject this morning is that of sanctification and Christian service. We are looking at an aspect of sanctification which is so easily forgotten and neglected in practical terms. The theme of this lecture is that Christian service is an essential, non - optional aspect of sanctification, a vital part of the life of holiness.

So let us begin by briefly laying down the Scriptural and theological basis for this fact. I will be brief because these things are known; we only need to be reminded of them.

Turning to Ephesians 2:10

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We have of course in this verse the whole Gospel, we are saved by God's work, that is we are justified -- saved -- accepted by God not because of anything we do, it is all of the Lord's doing, we are saved because of what Christ has done, saved by God's grace, not of what we do but by God's gift.

We do not believe we are saved by our good works, if we do we have clearly not understood the Gospel, we are outside its benefits. But we do believe that we are "*saved unto good works*," these good works being evidence that a saving work has taken place in our hearts. The well known children's hymn is right when it says, "*He died that we might be forgiven.*" (Justification), "*He died to make us good*" (Sanctification).

The good works spoken of in the text are those which God has planned and ordained that we should perform. It is part of God's design that we should carry out good works; these good works are of part of God's sanctifying purpose for us. It is rightly said that there is no justification without sanctification, or in other words there is no such thing as faith without works. True faith must produce good works. As James in his Epistle expresses it:

"Faith without works is dead."

Sanctification and good works then are most intimately related. Just as the old life expresses itself in works of evil and selfishness, so the new life that originates in regeneration expresses in sanctification, naturally manifests itself in works of self-denying service. Indeed it is through this very exercise that it develops and grows.

Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* reminds us that sanctification can be seen in two parts and is represented in Scripture as:

1. *The mortification of the old man, the body of sin.* When we trust in Christ the pollution and corruption that sin has brought to our human nature is

gradually removed. The Bible talks about “*crucifying the old man*”, and by this expression we see that this sanctifying power comes to us through the cross Christ, renewing our nature and conforming us to the likeness of Christ.

2. *The quickening of the new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* While we identify part of sanctification as negative in character *i.e.* the pulling down of the old structure dominated by sin; we also can identify the positive part of sanctification *i.e.* the erection of the new building dominated by the power of the Holy Spirit. We can describe this as the building of the new man in Christ, or the life that is lived to the glory of God. Both these aspects of course take place within us simultaneously.

(Plutarch tells us about the ship of Theseus, the ship on which he sailed to Crete to rescue Ariadne from the Minator. The ship was preserved by the Athenians, but as time went on its timbers one by one were replaced, until the whole ship was renewed. *(Probably will not use)*

J.C. Ryle also speaks of two parts of sanctification, in his case identifying what he calls, " *the active graces,*" and the "*passive graces*".

1. The active graces....The sanctified man will try to do good in the world, and to lessen the sorrow and increase the happiness of all around him. He will aim to be like his Master, full of kindness and love to every one; and this is not in word only, but by deeds and actions of self-denying work, according as he has opportunity. The selfish Christian professor, who wraps himself up in his own conceit of superior knowledge, and seems to care nothing whether others sink or swim, go to heaven or hell, so long as he walks to Church or Chapel in his Sunday best, and is called a "sound member" Such a man knows nothing of sanctification..... Saving faith and real converting grace will always produce some conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.

2. The passive graces Ryle identifies as being especially those which show themselves in submissiveness to the will of God, and in bearing and forbearing towards one another. Amongst the nine fruits of the Spirit identified by Paul in Galatians 5: 22, 23, he identifies, long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness as unquestionably passive graces.

We could include amongst the passive graces: *truthfulness, integrity, conscientiousness, genuineness, sincerity, consistency, constancy, faithfulness, incorruptibility.*

Others in the same vein speak of sanctification in terms of negative aspects and positive aspects.

1. The negative aspect has to do with separation from all those activities that defile and pollute us. For example II Corinthians 6:17 "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith of the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*"

2. The positive aspect of holiness involves the living out of the life of faith in the world without being part of it. It is not so much of feeling or an experience as a way of life that seeks to mirror in outlook and conduct the life of our Saviour. The positive side of sanctification involves what amounts to what can be a demanding identification with others and their needs.

The Reformers claimed that you cannot be Holy if you leave the world for a monastery or a hermits hut. There is a great deal of truth in this. John Wesley said that there is "*nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian*", in other words there is nothing is more contrary to holiness than losing interest in bringing the Gospel to one's fellow men.

"The outward form of our Lord's holiness was association with all sorts of folk from kings and governors down to tax collectors in other disreputables, in whom he took as much interest as he did in any other. Indeed, he showed special concern to help the poor, the obscure and the untaught those whom society as a whole had no time for, and was known for his unrabbi-like habit of making friends with them and spending time in their company. This element of our Lord's holiness must be part of the sanctified life of his people also.

The negative side of separation from the world is part of what is involved in the keeping of the First great Commandment, as summarised by our Lord. (*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul with all thy mind and with all thy strength*). Then it follows that identification with the world in this way is needed to fulfil the Second Commandment as summarised by our Lord. (*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*.)

General Booth once took as a New Year motto for the Salvation Army the one word "*others*." Truly sanctified individuals should have that as their motto all the time. Mentioning this calls to mind General Booth's famous statement at the very end of his life when he gave his renowned Albert Hall speech.

"While women weep as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry as they do now, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, I'll fight; while their remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight- I'll fight to the very end."

Sadly the word 'holiness' to some suggests something that is pale, anaemic, withdrawn, negative, passive and unmanly. Of course this is a complete misunderstanding, and in fact Scripture teaches us that holiness is the most positive, potent and often passionate quality that human beings can possess.

For too many Christians the whole notion of sanctification is that it is concerned with inner experiences, inner struggles and inner battles against our

besetting sins. None would deny this aspect of it, but the same dangers which attend those who are obsessively concerned with their own physical health and constantly taking their temperature, and taking notice of every ache and every pain, hypochondria is the name for it, the spiritual version of it amounts to an unhealthy obsession with our own inward spiritual state.

One writer puts it like this:

"We tend to say, 'I do like to hear sermons on sanctification and holiness. I having such a hard time, and my difficulties are great.' We talk about ourselves and outline our symptoms as patients always tend to do. We are eloquent about all this, and talk at great length about ourselves, our moods and states and conditions. We crave for sympathy and for some sudden way of deliverance and healing.

What a travesty of the Apostle's teaching! What you need to be told is that you are a slave (servant) of God, and that you belong to God. You must talk less about yourself and more about Him. Your business is to do what you know He wants you to do. He has bought you, bought you at such a price, such a cost, in order that you may do so. That is how the Apostle Paul preaches holiness. It is not a sentimental teaching which offers us some marvellous experience. It is manly, almost a military exhortation: Remember who you are. You have been set free from that old slavery; you are now a servant of God. Pull yourself together; and realise who your Owner is, who your Master is.

What is holiness? It is to be like Jesus Christ. What did He say of Himself? 'I came not to do my will, but the will of Him that sent me.' He did not consider himself. He said 'Here am I, send me'. Though He was the Son of God He humbled Himself, He volunteered, He gave Himself utterly and absolutely. 'The words I speak, I speak not of myself', He says. 'The works that I do are the works that the Father hath given me to do.' 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Philippians 2:8). That was the way in which He lived in this world."

"Such behaviour is the absolute perfection of holiness and sanctification. And you and I are to be like that. What we need is not experience, but the realisation that we are servants of God, and utterly and absolutely at His disposal."

Martin Lloyd Jones. Expositions., Romans 6:22

What then is holiness or sanctification? Yes it involves becoming further and further removed from sin such as the Apostle Paul identifies, adultery, fornication, selfishness, drunkenness, slander etc etc. To be holy means that we do not do these things, yes, that is essential. But there is also a positive side to it, to be holy means that we are devoted to God; that is set apart to God's service. For example the 'holy vessels' of the sanctuary in the Old Testament were set apart for the service of God. We are to devote ourselves to the service of God. As our text says:

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph 2:10

2. "Created in Christ Jesus" for apart from him we are nothing, and can accomplish nothing, "created in Christ Jesus", in order that we might be like Christ Jesus, that is transformed into his likeness through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Now of course this being transformed into the "likeness of Christ; as many aspects to it. The Puritan's were very good setting out all these various aspects. Take for example, Thomas Watson in his, *The Godly Man's Picture*.

The characteristics of a Christ like man:

A man of knowledge

A man moved by faith

A man fired with love

A man like God

A man careful about the worship of God

A man who serves God not men

A man whom weeps

A man who has the Spirit of God residing in him

A man who loves God's word

A man of humility

A man of prayer

A man and sincerity

A heavenly man

A zealous man

A patient man

A thankful man

A man who loves the Saints

A man who does not indulge himself in any sin

A man who is good in his relationship

A man who does things in spiritual manner

A man thoroughly trained in religion

A man who walked to God

A man who strives to be an instrument for making others godly

And of course all these requirements of what it is to be a Christ like individual are set in perhaps the greatest detail in Richard Baxter's more than comprehensive work, *The Christian's Directory*. This great *tome of more than one and a quarter million words; covers 1000 subjects in 948 pages*.

The subject is divided into four parts *i.e.*

Christian Ethics.....that is a Christian's private duties.

Christian Economics... that is a Christian's family duties.

Christian Ecclesiastics.. that is a Christian's duty to the church.

Christian politics... that is a Christian's duty towards rulers and neighbours, civic and social duties.

The Christ like spirit which should characterise all our service is well summed up in Philippians 2:1 - 8

Or we could turn to II Corinthians 8:9, where we read:

" For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Christ - likeness therefore involves the imitating of His self giving. His life involved incessant and continuous toil. Other texts come to mind for example, *"The Son of man hath not where to lay his head."* (Matt. 8:20, Luke 9:58). This is indeed a challenging description of his own life style here on earth. Here is the heavenly Son of God, come to do God's will and this means the loss for him of many comforts, personal possessions, and what we call 'free time'. (We do need free time or relaxation. The story of St John and the Hawk. You cannot keep the bow string taut at all times). This verse is given to us in the context of a man who approaches our Lord as a would be follower and our Lord says yes be my disciple, be my follower, but first of all consider the cost.

Another relevant text is: *"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* (Luke 2:49). We could ask ourselves are we about our heavenly Fathers business?

A lovely children's hymn from the great days of revival based on this text, contains these verses:

*Fain I would be as thou art;
Give me thy obedient heart;
Thou art pitiful and kind;
Let me have thy loving mind.*

*Above all, let me fulfil
God my heavenly Father's will;
Never his good Spirit grieve,
Only to his glory live.*

*Thou didst live to God alone:
Thou didst never seek Thine own;
Thou thyself didst never please;
God was all thy happiness.*

*Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb,
In thy gracious hands I am;
Make me, Saviour, what thou art;
Live thyself within my heart.*

The Christian life is not to be seen as a life of idleness or the wasting time. Think

of some of the titles of our Lord's parables. The Parable of the Talents, the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree.

We might here mentioned that which is sometimes referred to as the "Protestant Work Ethic".

"Calvin taught that at all men must work, even the rich, because to work was the will of God. It was the duty of men to server as God's instrument's here on earth, to reshape the world in the fashion of the kingdom of God, and to become part of the continuing process of his creation."

Baxter in his Christian's Directory referred to previously gives the believer directions on *"How to spend our days with God."*

The motive

Whatever you are doing, in company or alone, do it all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31). Otherwise, it is unacceptable to God.

Redeeming the time

Place a high-value upon your time, be more careful not losing it then you would have losing your money. Do not let worthless recreations, idle talk, and unprofitable company falsely rob you of your precious time.

Be more careful to escape that person, action or course of life that would rob you of your time then you would be to escape thieves or robbers.

Make sure that you are not merely never idle but rather that you are using your time in the most profitable way that you can and do not prefer a less profitable way before one of greater profit.

Eating and drinking

Eating drink with moderation thankfulness for health, not for unprofitable pleasure. Never fully eased your appetite in food or drink when it is prone to be detrimental to your health.

Prevailing sins

Do not make light of your habitual failures, but confess them and daily strive against them, taking care not to aggravate them by unrepentance and contempt.

Relationships

Remember every relationship has a special duty and its advantage for the doing of some good. God requires your faithfulness on this matter as well as in any other duty.

One text we might highlight is clearly summing up that which we are trying to say, that is John 9:4

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Listen to an introduction of CH Spurgeon's sermon on this text preached at the Surrey Chapel, Blackfriars Road, March the 21st 1867:

The sermon opens:

You observe that a very speculative question had been pulled to our Lord, and his answer to the very speculative question is, "I must work." His disciples wished to know something about the mysterious fact, that some persons are born in an unhappy condition – blind, or deaf, or dumb – on what account they were sent into the world under such disadvantageous circumstances. Would you not yourselves like to know? Do you not wish that the Saviour had expounded all that mystery? There are also many points of controversy connected with that question, that he could scarcely of had a more suggestive topic. Surely he might have enlightened us far more than Socrates or Plato. Why did he not at once, with such a noble opportunity, plunge into the labyrinth of metaphysics or begin to expound predestination, and open up the points in it which agree or disagree with free agency? Here was a noble opportunity for interpreting all the marvels of divine sovereignty, and natural casualty. Why did he not at once open all this up to the people? No; but with a very short answer he turns to them and says, "I must work; you may think; you may talk; you may argue, but I must work. You may give your selves up, if you know no better, to the inferior occupation of jangling about words, but I must work. Nobler calls I have to obey than those which come to your carnal ears."

We gather, then, that the Saviour has a greater respect for work than he has for speculation; that when he comes into the world, he will go to all the mighty thinkers, and the gentlemen who were constantly producing new ideas, and wonderful points of subtlety, and put them into the scale as so much rubbish; but that when he finds a single worker, a poor widow who has given her two mites, a poor saint who has spoken for Christ, and been the means of the conversion of a soul, he will take up these works which were done for him as precious grains of costly gold. We may say of the field of enterprise and work for Christ, as of the land of Havilah, "The gold of that land is good," and Christ thinks it to be so. He estimates the work of faith and labour of love done for him as a great price.

Let me now give some examples from the past of those who have lived according to this understanding of Christian service being part of

sanctification or holy- living that we have tried to describe in this paper.

Firstly, from the ministry of Richard Baxter in Kidderminster referred to a moment ago as the author of the Christian's Directory.

Example of the way Baxter apportioned his time.

Secondly let us remind ourselves of the great river of revival which flowed during the days of Whitfield and Wesley was fed by the tributary streams which represented the hard work and prayers of many almost unknown figures who established the Religious Societies, up and down the country, others who worked in lonely parts of the country such as Vivasor Powel and Griffith Jones in Wales, or others such as the Moravians who endured enormous suffering, persecution and disruption and yet nevertheless spread the message of the Gospel far and wide.

"If the part played by John Wesley in the religious regeneration of England can be compared with the influence of the sun in the awakening of nature in springtime, let it not be forgotten that a dawn full of promise preceded the sunrise, however beautiful it may have been. The dawn which announced and began this moral renewal was due to the Religious Societies which came into being at the beginning of 1678."

Throughout the reign of Queen Anne, and long into that of George I these Societies quietly yet effectively continued their work in the midst of increasing godlessness. Their number steadily increased throughout the Country where they appear to have been mostly closely associated with the parish church than in and London. They continue to support all worthy causes the specialist schools, whilst they regarded the pursuit of holiness in their own hearts the fundamental reason for their existence.

It is not without significance that John Wesley's father founded one such Society in Epworth in 1698 and that it was in a home where a Religious Society met and flourished that the Wesley brothers were brought up."

George Whitfield was also involved in these societies. On his return to Gloucester and 1735 he formed a group of several young people into a Religious Society. Neither is it without significance that the theme of his first sermon was, "The Necessity and Benefits of Religious Society".

Again was considering antecedents to the 18th-century revival reference might be made to the 'Concert for Prayer for Revival' begun by several ministers in Scotland in October 1744, concerned for the state of the church at that time. This exercise made a particular the man on time involving the setting of part of a period of time each Saturday evening and Sunday morning every week.

Thirdly John Wesley himself has much to teach us in regard to what a sanctified life really involves.

Take for instance what appears to be fairly typical week in his life in such as the 1748. We read of a Friday spent in the industrial Midland of England when he rode to Wednesbury near Birmingham and preached at about four in the

afternoon. He then got back on his horse and, "with some difficulty", reached Meriden, just south of Birmingham about nine that night. The next day was Saturday but he still needed to be back in London for the Sunday services, so he mounted his course of 4 AM in the morning and road 78 miles. This still left him short of London, so four o'clock on Sunday morning he was once again in the saddle, riding hard to be in order to arrive in London between 7 and 8 that morning. He then reached at the morning service,, and in the afternoon in the open air at Moorfields to what he described as, "*to a larger congregation then I have seen there for some years.*"

Wesley at this time was 45 years of age, the 20 years later his itinerary was little different. John Fletcher writing in 1771 reported that:

"He has generally blown the Gospel trumpet and rode 20 miles, before most of the professors, who despise his labours, have left their downy pillows."

In his early Seventies he was still capable riding 100 miles on horseback. Even at 81 there is record of him trudging 12½ miles through heavy rain in order to reach a preaching appointment. At 86 he could still claim to travel three or four thousand miles a year preaching.

Fourthly take another outstanding example of sanctified service, that outstanding missionary, William Carey

Typical day in the life of William Carey might be 12 June 1806:

5.45 a.m.	Read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible.
6.30 a.m.	Family worship with household and servants in Bengali.
7.00 a.m.	Read Persian with a munshi (language teacher).
8.00 a.m.	Did some Hindustani.
8.30 a.m.	Breakfast.
9.00 a.m.	Worked on translation of "Ramayana" poem from Sanskrit.
10.00 a.m. to	
1.30 p.m.	Teaching at Fort William College, then Dinner.
3.00 p.m.	Read proof sheets of Isaiah in Bengali.
5.00 p.m.	Translated part of Matthew's Gospel into Sanskrit with help of Indian scholar, Mrityunjay.
6.00 p.m.	Tea.
6.30 p.m.	Lesson in Telugu from a pundit.
7.00 p.m.	Visitor came in from England.
7.30 p.m.	Preached in English to about 40 people at the midweek prayer meeting.
9.00 p.m.	Revised Ezekiel in Bengali.
10.00 p.m.	Wrote a letter to the Society in England.
11.00 p.m.	Read chapter from the New Testament in Greek.

Fifthly An anecdote from the life of David Brainard

On one occasion David Brainard was very ill, and could not preach to the

Indians, he was found sitting up in bed, teaching an Indian his letters, that he might read the Bible; and so he said, "If I cannot serve God one way, I will in another."

Sixthly - some examples from the Moral Songs of Isaac Watts

*How doth the little busy bee,
Improved the shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower*

*How skilfully she builds her cell
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.*

*In works of labour or of skill
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.*

*In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let my first years be past;
Thank I may give for every day
Some good account at last.*

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