

THE TWO PARTS TO SANCTIFICATION

"Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth."
– John 17:17.

THE prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of St. John's Gospel was offered while our Lord was on the way from the Memorial Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane. From the prayer we learn that it was offered for the Apostles and all those who through the Word of the Lord should become His disciples, or followers.

The word *sanctify* has the significance of *set apart, made holy*. There are two parts to this work of sanctification. The first is that which *we* do, in the very beginning, when we *set ourselves* apart, with the desire to know and to do the will of God. The second is that part which comes gradually – the teachings and instructions which set before us things that we did not perceive before – certain principles of righteousness which we did not previously recognize. This is a *deeper* setting apart, and is done by *God*, inasmuch as it is done by the Father's arrangement.

This deeper meaning of sanctification is the one signified in the text. Hence, our Lord prays the Father to do this work. The disciples had left all to follow Jesus, and were set apart in the sense that they desired to know and to do the will of the Father. Our Lord prayed that the work of Divine instruction might go on in them, as it is written: "They shall all be taught of God." The Master desired that the disciples should come under Divine, providential instruction, which He indicated would come through the Word of God.

At that time the *Word* was not the Bible as we have it now, for the New Testament had not then been written. The Truth presented in the New Testament, however, is not God's Word in full, nor all

of the Truth, but merely a portion of it. Our Lord did not pray that truth in general along different lines should be the portion of His followers, but rather that they should have knowledge of the Divine Plan and purposes.

There may be more or less truth coming into a man's life, which will awaken his mind. It may be the truth concerning chemistry, or it may be other scientific knowledge. There is truth respecting geology, truth respecting the sun, etc. These may influence the mind and lift a man somewhat from his fallen condition. But these are not *the Truth*, to which our Lord refers, and which is [R5320 : page 293] far more necessary than is the knowledge of the weight of the earth or the distance of the stars.

All the various truths which come to the world in general, which lead them to think, and which finally point some to their need of the Redeemer, are preparatory. But not only do these latter have such a drawing of God, but they must also set themselves apart. And these general truths, which are more or less clear, may bring the individual to the real school. These we may term a preparatory course. There must be such a preparation before the real course of the School of Christ is reached.

THE FIRST PART OF SANCTIFICATION

There is a sanctifying that takes place before the *real* sanctifying begins. The Lord said to the people of Israel, "Sanctify yourselves and I will sanctify you." This would be their setting of themselves apart by a certain hope. But the setting of *one's self* apart is one thing, and *God's* sanctifying him is another. Concerning the call of this Age, no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son, and no man cometh unto the Son except the Father shall previously have drawn him.

First comes the drawing of the Father through the natural mind. Man's brain is so constituted that there is a natural drawing – a

desire to know the Creator. This we see manifested in the heathen, who have never known God and have never had the Bible. These people have a natural inclination or desire to worship God. Those who have this natural inclination of the brain not too much perverted by the fall, are in our Lord's providence guided to the Truth, the Light, without which no man can come to Him. Perhaps they find Jesus through a hymn or a tract or a book.

Willingness to receive God is merely the first step, as it were, in response to this natural drawing. As they come to enter the way, they learn that it is narrow, difficult, and that the "gate" is low. Of course, many are turned away. God is not seeking all. He is seeking a very special class; and therefore He is not seeking those who would be discouraged at the narrowness of the way and the lowness of the gate. These conditions are made so for the very purpose of turning such away.

Formerly, we thought that those who turned away because of the narrowness of the way and the lowness of the gate would go to eternal torment. Now we see that God is seeking a special class to do a good work – those who are seeking to do His will. Whoever does not manifest the proper degree of zeal would probably be injured if he endeavored to go on. Therefore, the Lord says, Consider the terms, count the cost, weigh the matter, before you decide to be My disciple. Then, if you decide to be My disciple, come and follow Me.

After one has become a disciple of the Lord, he comes into the condition of the class represented in our text by the word *them*. In this class were the twelve Apostles, the five hundred other brethren whom St. Paul mentions, and all who throughout the Gospel Age have accepted our Lord in sincerity and faithfulness of heart. To all such the prayer applies – "Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth"!

Strange to say, this which we thought to be the *end* of the way is but the *beginning* of it. Formerly we thought that to accept Jesus was all that there was to do. Our friends said, You have heard of Jesus; you have accepted Him. That is all there is of it. Now tell some others about Jesus.

But after we come to know of the Truth, we need to know more. If each of us were to cast his mind back and try to recall how much he understood at first, he would realize that he knew that he was a sinner and that if he came to Jesus the Father would set him apart. This is what St. Paul refers to when he says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Ephesians 2:10.) This setting apart the Father does through His Truth, as before pointed out.

TRUTH THAT SANCTIFIES

This sanctifying Truth is not to be viewed from the standpoint of general knowledge, for this Truth is not for the world – is not *intended* for them. It is for the consecrated – for those who have become God's children. It is the kind of truth that God gives His family. The Apostle Paul says that God has called us according to His purpose, that in the end He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7.) God has a purpose, which will be fully exhibited in future Ages in the further development of His great Plan.

God had a special purpose when He called and set apart a special class. The special Truth which does that sanctifying work is the Truth of His great Plan of the Ages. He does not make all this known at once. The revelation of His Plan has been going on for centuries. Some of these revelations have come to us through the Prophets, some through Jesus and some through the Apostles. These revelations constitute the Heavenly provision for sanctification.

It is necessary, however, that we have the Plan, and something more than the Plan also. Various other things are to be considered, although this Truth is the channel of sanctification: "Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth." If one were caring for a babe, for instance, she would think about its food, fresh air, exercise, etc. So it is with God's people. Truths are gradually opened up to their observation. Our Father leads us out into various experiences in order to have our senses exercised. Our experiences and providences cause us to think, to appreciate, to study, to inquire; and as we do so, we develop by means of these experiences and providences. We are led to consider, What does *this* experience mean, and what does *that* one teach?

While God's Word is the basis for all our instruction, yet it is not our only source of knowledge. There are various lessons to be learned through the varied experiences of life. The child that would merely receive food and then lie still – merely eating and sleeping, never having a chance to toddle around – would not know how to walk. So it is with God's child.

THE SECOND PART OF SANCTIFICATION

We see that God called us with a new call. We are to have a new nature. Ours is not to be an earthly nature. The real object and purpose of our call is to fit and prepare us to be His New Creation, superior to men and to angels. We are to be Divine channels of blessing to all creatures – angels and men – for the development of all God's Universe, including other worlds, as they come to have inhabitants. As we come to see the scope of God's Plan, we see a reason why God is giving us trials, experiences. Our Lord Jesus was to be a merciful High Priest; hence His experiences, His sufferings. And if it was necessary that our Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of the Flock, should suffer, how much more is it necessary to our perfecting that we should suffer!

We should have a great deal of trial, suffering, temptation, and, being succored in these, we should know how to succor others. Those who are faithful amongst the Lord's people now, become especially developed in character-likeness to the Master. They are privileged to become *elders*, that they may feed the *young*, that they may [R5320 : page 294] instruct the Flock, that these may grow in the fruits and graces of the Spirit – meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness – love. Therefore, the chief qualification of those who would stand as monitors amongst the Lord's people is that they be faithful, loyal, and manifest, not a lordly spirit, but a humble spirit, a spirit of service.

Sanctification is a gradual work, lasting throughout the Christian's life. It is not a point which he reaches only at *death*, but which he should attain soon after consecration. Consecration opens the door and gives him the standing, gives him the relationship, gives him the backing and encouragement of the Divine promises, and puts him in the way, therefore, to cultivate the various fruits of the Spirit, and finally to attain joint-heirship with our Lord in the Heavenly glory. But to *maintain* this standing in the Body of Christ, requires that fruits shall be produced, evidences of love and devotion.

Testings will come thereafter as to the degree of faithfulness in service, and to see how much of besetments he would endure – how strong a wind of false doctrine he could stand, how much of the assaults of the flesh and of the Devil he could bear without being unsettled and driven away from the Truth.

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord knows our frame, that He will, with each temptation, provide a way of escape. We shall all be tried. If the fire becomes so hot that to go any further would destroy us, the Lord will prevent this. By and by we become stronger. Then He may give us even greater testings. So "the Lord your God doth

prove you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

TRIALS PROPORTIONATE TO STRENGTH

A metallurgist tries his metal – proves it. He tests it, to separate the dross from it. After he has separated some of the alloy, he puts in another flux, to remove other dross; and then another flux, etc. So the Lord is taking away our dross. He does not take away all of the dross of our flesh; for it is the New Creature that is being [R5321 : page 294] perfected. As the dross in our minds becomes apparent to us, we as New Creatures will more and more co-operate with God in its elimination.

So the Lord's people are to be more and more sanctified through the Truth. The word *sanctify*, then, conveys the thought of making saintly, holy. Every day of our lives should make us more sanctified – more fit for God's service in the future.

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