

Holiness: Its Nature, Part 1

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Will you now give attention to the reading of the Word of God as it is found in Paul's letter to the church at Rome, Romans 6. And in order to catch something of the flow of thought which precipitated the question with which the chapter begins, I will begin reading at verse 19, which in a real sense, is a summary of the entire 5th chapter. I shall read from verse 19 of chapter 5 through verse 14 of chapter 6.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. [And may I pause to underscore that those who would take this chapter and make it purely forensic are not honest with this phrase 'walk in newness of life.' Whatever this death is, its result is not only a new standing but a transformed walk.] For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

In our initial study yesterday afternoon, I stated that the subject of Gospel holiness or Biblical sanctification was too vast and too expansive to be treated in any comprehensive way in four messages, and that it was too complex an issue to be exhausted in any one of its parts. And so in the preparation of these studies/lectures or sermons, whatever else they are, I have sought to exercise a very ridged discipline of exclusion and a very careful selectivity. But that selectivity and discipline of exclusion, I trust, has not been arbitrary. But as I intimated yesterday, has been regulated by the desire for the immediate edification of the students, for the long-range preparation and furnishing of your minds with these fundamental Biblical perspectives so that in turn, you may impart them to your people, and then also the

edification of the larger audience, the people of God in general, whom we do indeed welcome heartily into these gatherings. Then in our study, we proceeded to examine one fundamental issue, namely, the importance or the necessity of Gospel holiness. And I sought to demonstrate from the Scriptures the tremendous importance of this doctrine in relation to the human predicament, in relation to the divine plan of salvation, in relation to individual concern, and in relation to the Biblical requirements for the work of the ministry. And then last night's message from Mr. Aken was indeed the expansion of that fourth line of thought. And I hope you saw that there was a wonderful unplanned bias that I'm sure by the Lord was a wonderful synthesis of emphasis.

Now this morning, we begin a consideration of what has been entitled in the announced subject as the nature of Gospel holiness or sanctification. And because the majority of the texts we shall consider this morning are translated in our English Bibles with the word "sanctification," I will use that word in the opening up of our subject. Having underscored the necessity of Gospel holiness or Biblical sanctification, we now address ourselves to the question, "What is the precise nature of that sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord?" And may I pause in passing to say that what I told you yesterday was nothing but good Westminster Confession theology. And as a school which in all of its public statements as well as its actual framework of instruction adheres to this ancient document, I read paragraph one on the doctrine of sanctification:

"They who are once effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lust thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

So for the astounded brother who asked the question of Mr. Aken, "Was he teaching that without sanctification and holiness you're not a Christian?", I was indeed teaching that because the Word of God teaches it. And this ancient confessional document concludes its opening paragraph with that very point of emphasis. It is that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Well, then, how are we to understand the nature of that holiness, the nature of that sanctification without which we shall not see Him with joy? Well, a careful study of the usage of the words in the New Testament pertaining to this doctrine, a careful analysis of the overall concept of sanctification (where the basic words "sanctify," "sanctification," "holy," or "holiness" are not used, but the concept is there) will lead us to the conclusion that we are to understand God's gracious work of sanctification as being comprised of three fundamental categories or three dimensions or three elements. And I have entitled them "Sanctification Begun: The Radical Cleavage with Sin," "Sanctification Continued: The Gradual Process of Mortification and Renewal (the negative and the positive)," and "Sanctification Completed: The Final Crisis in Which Both Body and Soul Will Be Confirmed in Holiness Forever." And we will forever leave Romans 7--hallelujah!

Alright, then, in the time allotted this morning, let us fasten our mental seat belts and attempt to cover this broad spectrum of concern forced upon us by the teaching of

the Word of God. What is the nature of sanctification? Well, we must begin with grappling with that aspect of teaching that I have entitled "Sanctification Begun: The Radical Cleavage with Sin." Now most of the writing on the subject of sanctification focuses upon sanctification continued. That is the process by which we mortify remaining corruption on the one hand and develop in the positive graces of Christ-likeness on the other. And because it is that process which involves us in so many complexities and problems, it is understandable that most of the theological and practical and devotional literature written on this subject is concerned to open up and give practical understanding and direction to the people of God concerning that process. There is in the Scriptures a very clear body of teaching that we must come to grips with. And I may say that apart from coming to grips with this, we will not really understand the nature of the process. We must start where the Word of God starts. And the Word of God confronts us with a doctrine of sanctification begun, which is nothing less than a radical cleavage of sin. Now we think, and rightly so, of regeneration, justification, and adoption as definitive acts, as non-repeated and non-repeatable provisions of God's grace. But perhaps as no other theologian and exegete has done, Professor Murray has left a very helpful legacy to the church in his careful analysis of those many portions in the Word of God where the concept of process will simply not obtain in the context in which the term "sanctification" or "holiness" is used. We find a usage of the word "sanctify" which constitutes that act of God a definitive, once for all, non-repeatable work of grace.

Let us look at several specimen passages, and they are only that. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul, addressing himself to the church at Corinth, which obviously had many problems in what we might call sanctification continued, the gradual process. There was the problem of arrested growth. There was the problem of areas of sin that were not being mortified; graces that were not being cultivated. And yet notice how he addresses them: "Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...." As he addresses himself to the church of God at Corinth, he describes them as those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. And he uses a perfect passive. He indicates that something has happened to constitute them a sanctified people and as to the fruit of which remains to that very hour. In spite of all the problems in the process, something definitive has occurred in the life and in the experience of the church at Corinth. And so with a play on words, having described them as the "having been sanctified in Christ Jesus," he then goes on to say, "called saints." And it is most likely that the word "called" there does not mean designated saints but called in all of its rich Biblical significance of that effectual work of God by which He not only summons sinners out of darkness and into the Light, but graciously brings them out of the kingdom of darkness and into fellowship with His Son, for he picks up that thought again in verse 9. It's almost as though he answers the question, "How did they become the sanctified in Christ Jesus?" They became such by virtue of their effectual calling.

Then in chapter six and verse 11, we find a similar usage of the word "sanctified." Having described those forms of sin, the practice of which is inconsistent with membership in the kingdom of God, he then says by way of contrast in verse 11, "And such 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." And here he uses an aorist passive. There has occurred an element of sanctification that is definitive, that is once for all. And in the experience of every Corinthian Christian, it is

past; it is accomplished. It is something that cannot be repeated. It is a definitive sanctification.

And then Acts 20:32 might be brought forward as another indication of this usage. As the apostle is encouraging the elders whom he has charged with serious, solemn, and awesome responsibilities, he then says, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." And here we have a perfect passive participle. The inheritance is among those (not present participle: "who are being sanctified"). But He gives you the inheritance among those who have been sanctified with a sanctification that is definitive. It has already occurred in their experience. You find similar usages in the noun form in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2. Other passages could be brought to bear upon the issue, but I trust these will suffice to support the assertion that there is a doctrine of sanctification begun, which in the language of Professor Murray, should be understood as definitive sanctification, a sanctification that is radical, once for all, non-repeatable.

Now how are we to understand that dimension of sanctification? Sanctification begun is to be understood in the light of two major categories of thought in the New Testament and several minor categories. I will take time only to expound briefly the two major categories, mention the minor, and then give you a brief bibliography of Professor Murray's exegetical work, which I trust you will quickly take in hand and carefully study.

Now what is the nature or character of this sanctification begun? Well, its two major categories of thought in the New Testament are, in the light of Romans 6, death to sin, and in the light of Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4, a putting off of the old man and a putting on of the new. And perhaps no passage is more fundamental in all of the Word of God in addressing itself to this dimension of God's gracious work of sanctification begun than is the passage read in your hearing, Romans 6, the entire chapter, and perhaps we should say even continuing through chapter 7 and verse 6. Paul is answering the objection, that if our salvation in terms of our acceptance before God is based exclusively upon the obedience of another, and the obedience of that other is received by faith and faith alone, then the devil's logic is now added to that theology by the anticipated objection:

"Well, if I raise a mountain of sin 10,000 feet high, and you tell me, Paul, that in the obedience of Jesus Christ is a righteousness adequate for that high mountain of sin, let us then raise the mountain to 20,000 feet so that we magnify the grace of Jesus Christ all the more. If you tell me that wherever there is a mountain peak of sin, there is a peak of grace that exceeds it and goes beyond it, let us then continue in sin that grace may abound. Let's raise mountains to grace out of the stuff of mountains of our sin."

That's the devil's logic added to the truth of justification based on the doing and the dying of another and received by faith alone. Now Paul's going to answer that objection: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. [And now notice what is the crux of his answer.] How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Paul's answer to the devil's logic, growing out of the doctrine of free justification based on the perfect righteousness of Christ and received by faith alone, is to introduce the entire doctrine of the nature of

union with Christ. And in essence, what he says is this: the same faith which so unites you to Christ so that you now share by imputation in the perfect righteousness that He Himself has wrought, it is that same union which has brought you not only into the participation of His objective righteousness, but has brought you in a way that is inscrutable as far as dissecting it with clinical analysis but real nonetheless. It is that same union with Christ by faith that makes you possessor of an imputed righteousness that is utterly perfect. And it is in the virtue of that union that Christ's death for sin has become your death to sin. And that's the heart of his answer: "We who died to sin." And who are the "we" who died to sin? All who out of a sense of guilt and the weight of sin have looked away from ourselves and have embraced in faith the Lord Jesus Christ our righteousness. All who have thus embraced Him as their righteousness, according to Paul, have died to sin. And his question is, "How in the world can longer live in that realm to which we have died?"

Now if we were to have the time to trace out the argument in detail, we would first of all establish that our living to sin and in the realm of sin is a very real, a very existential experience for everyone of us. Let me just briefly trace out the lines of thought. Paul says that by nature all the Romans, without exception, were the slaves of sin. Verse 16: "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?" Verse 17: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin...." Verse 20: "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." The servitude to sin was very real. The best commentary on it is Ephesians 2:1-3. While we were sin's slaves, we fulfilled the desires of the flesh and the mind. We were animated by the impulses of our own fallen nature under the control of the devil himself. Paul says, "the spirit that now worketh [same verb used as we have in Philippians--'God worketh in you'] in the children of disobedience."

You see, the slavery to sin is real. It's not an abstraction. It was real. It resulted in their presenting the members of their bodies slaves to their master. The mind thought the thoughts that pleased the master. The eyes looked upon the objects that pleased the master. The hands did the bidding of the master. The feet walked in the paths dictated by the master. But now he says, "In virtue of your union with Christ, you have been so identified with Jesus Christ in the virtue of His death, His burial, and His resurrection that you in Him and with Him have died to sin." And notice how pervasive this emphasis is--verse 2: "...we, that are dead to sin...." Verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him..." Verse 7 (a tacky exegetical problem). It may be translated, "He that is died is justified or released from sin." Verse 14 (It's not an exhortation; it's a statement of fact.): "For sin shall not have dominion over you...." Verse 18: "Being then made free from sin...." Verse 22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness...." Now, you see, the Apostle is teaching, not exhorting. At this point, he's simply teaching that for every person to whom Christ has begun His righteousness in terms of the glorious doctrine of justification so thoroughly expounded in chapter 3, verse 21 to the end of chapter 5, that such a person has died to sin. Now if the Word of God is teaching anything in this passage, it is teaching that.

Basically, then, what does this concept of death to mean? Well, I can do no better than to whet your appetite for the material that I'll mention by way of a little bibliography later on than to quote from Professor Murray who says on page 204 of *Principles of Christian Conduct*,

"The person who has died to sin no longer lives and acts in the sphere or realm of sin. In the moral and spiritual realm, there is a transition as real and decisive as in the realm of the psychical physical on the event of ordinary death. Those who still live in the realm of sin and whose life is constituted by sin may say with reference to the person translated from it, 'He passed away, and lo, he was not. Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. The place that knew him knows him no more.' There is the kingdom of sin, of darkness, and of death. The forces of iniquity rule there. It is the kingdom of this world and lies in the wicked one. The person who has died to sin no longer lives there. It is no more the world of his thought, affection, will, life, and action. His wellsprings are now in the kingdom which is totally antithetical, the kingdom of God and of His righteousness. It is of this translation that Paul speaks elsewhere when gives thanks to the Father who 'delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love' (Colossians 1). "We are too ready [and O, listen to the dear man of God who now looks upon the face of his Savior with joy] to give heed to what we deem to the hard, empirical facts of Christian profession. And we have erased the clear line of demarcation which Scripture defines. As a result, we've lost our vision of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Our epic has lost its dynamic, and we've become conformed to the world. We know not the power of death to sin in the death of Christ and are not able to bear the rigor of the liberty of redemptive emancipation. We died to sin. The glory of Christ's accomplishment and the guarantee of the Christian ethic are bound up in that doctrine. If we live in sin, we've not died to it. And if we've not died to it, we are not Christ's. If we died to sin, we no longer live in it. 'For we who are such as have died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?' (Romans 6:2)."

And frankly, brethren, this is why it rather disturbs me to hear people throwing laurels at the feet of this dear man of God and calling him perhaps the most careful, reformed exegete since Professor Warfield and then become irritated when someone dares to preach and press to the conscience the exegetical work that the dear man of God did.

It is true, if we died to sin, how can we live any longer in that realm? Peter gives the same emphasis in 1 Peter 2:24 and chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. But I said this is only a surface treatment. There is another dominant Biblical analogy to set forth this concept of sanctification begun in the radical cleavage with sin. And it is the concept of Colossians 3, verses 8 and 9 in which the Apostle Paul, having exhorted the Colossians to the process of mortification, the putting to death of remaining sin, says that that process is to be carried out in a context in which there's been a radical cleavage with the dominion of sin. So after exhorting them in verse 5 to "put to death therefore," he now says in verses 8 and 9, "But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man...." And here you have the concept of something that's definitive, once for all, unrepeatable. There was a putting off of the old and a putting on of the new. And all of the exhortations with respect to the problems in the process and the demands of the process derive from the radical nature of the beginning. He says since you have put off and put on, it is necessary that you continue to mortify the deeds of the flesh (negative sanctification), cultivate the graces of love, meekness, and patience as he goes on to describe them (the positive dimensions of progressive sanctification).

And in Ephesians 4 verses 22 and following, you have the parallel passage, and though the translation in most of our English Bibles would indicate that that's an exhortation, I'm convinced that Professor Murray's treatment of the exegesis and the grammatical problems is very convincing. And it's found in that chapter in *Principles of Christian Conduct* called "The Dynamic" in which he treats very carefully this whole problem (pages 214-217) and demonstrates conclusively that Ephesians 4 is a parallel to Colossians 3 in which the exhortations in the realm of progressive sanctification derive from the reality of definitive sanctification, the radical cleavage in which they were taught of Christ to put off the old man and put on the new.

And then there are a few secondary analogies in Scripture which underscore the same basic concept that sanctification begun is a sanctification involving a radical cleavage with sin. It is the concept of Romans 8 that every Christian has been constituted spiritual. Romans 8:7-9:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

What's the obvious teaching? Well, it's this: Every believer has the Spirit of Christ. All who possess the Spirit of Christ have been introduced to the realm of the Spirit as the dominant context of spiritual reality. Flesh is no longer the dominant context. If it is, he says you're devoid of the Spirit. And if you're devoid of the Spirit, you're none of His. He does not say, "If flesh dominates, you're in the realm of the Spirit, but you're not full of the Spirit, you're not controlled by the Spirit, you have a problem in progressive sanctification." No, he says, "If you're not basically in the realm of the Spirit, your problem is your unregeneracy. You are none of His." Now, my dear friends, please see it with your own eyes in the Bible. Look at it and let it come through the ear gate and the eye gate: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." That was not written as a club by which to go after Pentecostals and say your teaching on obtaining the Spirit is unbiblical. No, it may be pressed into that use where necessary, but my friend, that's not its use in the context. In the context, the Apostle is demonstrating that all for whom there is no condemnation are those who are in union with Christ. And in union with Christ, I have been brought out of the realm of the flesh and into the realm of the Spirit. That's why Paul can say in verse 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God [not any others]." Now that's after writing about the reality of the struggles of Romans 7. That's in the context of verse 13 where he talks about mortification and putting to death remaining sin. There's all that realism, but don't let that realism bleed away the vigor of these passages.

And then another line of emphasis in the New Testament, of course, is the whole concept that we are a washed people. It's stated very clearly in such passages as 1 Corinthians 6:11: "Ye have been washed [a once for all washing]." And it's put in the same context as the definitive justifying act. It's also in Titus 3. And then it's beautifully taught by our Lord in John 13: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet...." What is that bath all over? That's definitive sanctification. That's sanctification begun, the radical cleavage with sin, with sin's dominion, and with sin's lordship. And I urge upon you at this time, if you have never examined this dimension of Biblical truth carefully, please, I urge you to obtain a copy of Professor Murray's *Selective Writings, Volume 2* and read the section beginning on page 277-313. The

first two articles in particular deal with this. And then in *Principles of Christian Conduct* pages 202-228. 38:37

But now I must hurry on in the ten minutes that yet remain to touch the other two dimensions. And though there is some imbalance, it leaves the opportunity to enlarge in the next hour that I am privileged to share with you. But now, the Bible also teaches that the nature of sanctifying work of God is not only to be understood as a radical cleavage with sin beginning this gracious work, but we must understand it as sanctification continued by means of a gradual process. And the texts which teach the necessity and reality of the process are legion. Let me try to classify them very quickly into several categories and give you just a specimen text or two for each one.

First of all, the texts which teach the reality and the struggle with remaining sin. Romans 7 and Galatians 5:17. The same Paul who teaches in Romans 6 that there is this breaking of sins dominion, and in Romans 8, that there is this fundamental transferal from the realm of flesh to the realm of the Spirit. Thank God, that sandwiched in between is that biographical transcript of his own heart: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." And he knows the agony of the reality of remaining sin. He asserts it again in Galatians 5:17 when he says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other...."

Now there is a secondary category of texts which force upon us that sanctification is a gradual process. And it is those texts which underscore sanctification as continuous renewal. Romans 12:1-2: "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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...." Well, you see, that has to be a process, as the mind is continually transformed in this work of renewal. 2 Corinthians 3:18 is another dominant renewal text: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD." There's the concept of a process of gradual renewal into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there is a third category of texts which can only be understood in terms of a process of sanctification. It is those texts which demand the constant mortification of sin. Romans 8:13: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." There is the necessity, you see, of the constant mortification. People who have died to sins must yet put sins to death. And Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...." People who have put off the old and put on the new are not yet perfect new men, and they have the duty of mortification.

And then a fourth category of texts are those which lay out the duty of constantly cultivating Christian graces. We have Peter's words: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance...(2 Peter 1:5-6)." Here is a duty laid upon people in whom the dominion of sin has been broken, which can only be performed by a gradual process.

And then there are those texts in which we are exhorted to continuous cleansing. 2 Corinthians 7:1 is a specimen text: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness

in the fear of God." That's a process, and it goes on until that last stain is removed and we are confirmed in holiness forever.

Now let me just say quickly by way of application, any person who finds no problems with this process is either indifferent to its claims or ignorant of its nature. I could hardly believe my ears when some of the fellows sitting here today told me (and so it was confirmed by two witnesses, so it's Biblical that I should repeat it) that someone dared to claim that he could no longer sing with any degree of enthusiasm or felt conviction, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it." He dared to claim that for 13 years he had felt no proneness to wander. I say that man is ignorant of his own heart, and ignorant of the full dimensions of the demands of this process.

And then, thank God, sanctification is going to be complete someday. Sanctification will be completed as it was begun. It was begun with a radical definitive work, and thank God, it's going to be completed by what I call the final crisis. Now for most of us, it will come in two installments. When we pass the portals of death, we will join the ranks--and O, how I thank God for that one text because it's the only explicitly clear text on the subject. There are many inferences, but how I thank God for Hebrews 12:18-23, where the writer to the Hebrews says, "You have not come...." Then he describes the peculiarities of the Mosaic economy (and may I say that that passage is pivotal in some other controversies with which some of you are wrestling). But he says, "You are come...." And among the many privileges and realities to which I come through Christ the mediator of the new covenant inserted is this precious little word: "to the spirits of just men made perfect" (v. 23).

O, I tell you, if I must pass through death, this is one of the things among many others that takes away the dread of death itself, though the experience of dying is frightful to me as I think of it. To know that God has decreed that the moment this spirit is wrenched from this body, all of the energy and virtue of the death of Christ that procured the perfecting of my spirit will come--may I say it reverently--crashing in with irresistible glory. And every last stain of sin will be purged from Al Martin's spirit. And it will look upon the face of Jesus to love Him, to praise Him sinlessly.

Then they'll stick this old beat up carcass in the ground, and the worms will have a Thanksgiving meal but only until that hour when there is the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God. And when He speaks, that same energy will come crashing in upon all the scattered atoms of this body and reconstitute it like unto His own glorious body. And that will be the completion of the process. In the language of Philippians 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body...." And that perfected spirit will then join its proper habitation, a perfected body.

And then there will be none of that tension where the spirit enjoys more desires of grace than the body can hold, when with all that is within us the level of grace has brought us to the point where we long to serve with an energy the body does not have--no more of that disparity. What a wonderful thing to have a spirit, a heart that has no motions but those that are holy and a body that will be its willing servant to do all the impulses of that holy spirit. That's sanctification. For most of us, I say, it will come in two stages. For those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, they'll get the double invasion of that irresistible power impinging upon spirit and body. Final phase will be, they shall be glorified with Christ.

Let me conclude by simply saying, it is a wonderful thing what God has purposed to do for His own. The same God who conceived in His infinite wisdom and sovereign love to answer all of the exigencies arising at the legal dimension because of our sin satisfies His own law by the bloodletting and obedience of His own Son. And that is the foundation of our confidence, the ground of our coming, and as it were, substructural to all other considerations, to know that God has made perfect provision for my complete restoration to His image. And He has chosen to do so in that work of grace the Bible calls sanctification. And it is set before us in these three major dimensions or categories: sanctification begun (the radical cleavage), sanctification continued (the gradual process), and sanctification completed (the final crisis). And I want to say emphatically, God never sanctifies apart from all three dimensions. All whom He sanctifies die to sin. If they live at all, even a few hours like the dying thief, they'll be evidence of process. And there will be--thank God--the final consummation.

Where does it all come from? Union with Christ. When by faith we are implanted into Christ, then in the language of the confession, it is in the virtue of His death and resurrection that sin's dominion is destroyed. And in the language of the confession, we are enabled both to mortify sin and cultivate those graces. And thank God, one day we shall look upon Him with joy. Do you know that sanctifying work? My friend, if not, you are none of His. If you do, take heart, the struggle will not be forever. Thank God, the consummation is coming. And He who has begun the good work will complete it.

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