

intentional will. Many of life's miseries exist by God's permission: poverty, disease, sin, and war. But who, knowing God's nature, would conclude that He intends these things?

He permits man to be lost but His intention is that all men should be saved. Christ's dying on the cross for all men is God's proof enough of that matter! He permits Satan to operate in God's world yet to say that He intends that we should be tried, chastened, refined or rebuked by Satan is unworthy of God's loving nature. His intentional will is that a regenerated population might have the joy of living, the zest for things holy, and the longevity that belongs to those who live worthily and decently.

This is a time for our best thinking and a time for real testing. Where one stands with God determines where he will stand in eternity.

A seventeen year old young boy refused to make up his mind to come to God. Said he, "But my buddies will all laugh at me, they know the life I have lived." His dad, being a devout Christian, said, "Son, your buddies can laugh you into hell, but they can't laugh you out of it." Indeed, they cannot! It is the intentional will of God that no person should go to hell; that every person should enter that eternal land in God's blessed company. But he won't make a single one go against his will to either place!

THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

May 25, 1958

Scripture: John 17

Just suppose right now I asked you, "Are you sanctified?" What kind of an answer would you be able to give? Wouldn't you be like most of us in saying that you don't even know what the word means? Sanctified! Yet it is one of the fundamentals of our Christian faith and should be rescued from the dusty shelves of old memories of poor uses and abuses.

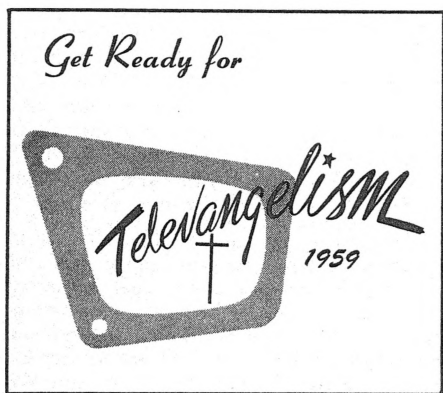
In that memorable prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17 He prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is

truth." A few remember people saying that they have been sanctified but somehow or other we remember most of them without much charity as a type of odd person who either had more religion than the rest of us or who had presumed upon a virtue about which they knew so little.

Sanctification is more than separation from the world though it involves separation. It means dedication and equipment for service in God's Kingdom. This dedication comes as an act by which one is brought into contact and in possession of divine truth. Jesus, knowing that His earthly mission was coming to a close, prayed for God to equip those early disciples so they could continue His mission and message. Without a setting aside in dedication there would have been no continuance of that flaming zeal.

HISTORY'S TWO EXTREMES

But too many efforts have been expended in trying to make sanctification a matter of Puritanism. All down through the ages serious-minded people have insisted that one must ruthlessly and forthrightly cut loose all ties with everything and every person that did not share in the Gospel interests. That contact, they said, meant



inevitable contamination. Self-denial became the theme-song of their lives and life was denuded of much that was innocent and harmless.

On the other side of this theological ledger many believe that Puritanism cut too deeply and, therefore, severed vital roots that could have been the veins of fresh life. There are many great assets in music, art, literature and research that enhance the Christian witness rather than degrades it. Many facets of the world's diamonds could shine in radiance while adding lustre to our lives in this polishing business called sanctification. General Booth was quite right when he asked, "Why should all the best tunes be left to the devil?" We might add, "Why should good entertainment, fine dramas, great musical scores . . . why should these be forfeited to the devil's use just because there may be some subordinate angle that doesn't speak of doxologies?" No, sanctification is not the process by which life is impoverished of all activities that would give lustre.

Jesus reminds that it is better to go through life with one eye that sees than to enter hell with both eyes acting as though they were blind. Or to paddle the boat of life with a single hand and continue the voyage rather than to sit idle with both hands and to coast into hell.

CONSCIENCE

Yet to contend that this day of free lance indulgence where many feel no sense of shame in being in the wrong places, where the dust of the world is on the feet of most, where one is content oftentimes to write his own set of commandments, follow the authority of his own conscience whether or not that conscience has been schooled by Christ . . . in that sort of day our worry is not so much that we should interpret sanctification as Puritanism but as libertinism. Herein is the modern danger. When all the reins have been thrown aside, then, chaos . . . much like what we have . . . is the inevitable result.

In his characterization of Thomas Chalmers, Lord Rosebery wrote, ". . . it should be said that this saintliness was not of a

. . . brooding in religious solitude. Here was a man, bustling, striving, organizing, speaking and preaching with the dust and fire of the world on his clothes, but carrying his shrine with him everywhere."¹ Just so is the Christ-follower who wants to fit into the fellowship that is being sanctified by God's grace.

DEFINITION

This wonderful Christian status—sanctification—is best understood as a being filled with God. A God-fulness. "To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God"—that is the prescription. When one knows Christ in a way that this knowledge transcends all other knowledge; that is, it receives deeper berth, wider range and higher dimensions than anything else he knows—when that is the case, then that life is being poured full of God and Godliness. It is the gradual rise of faith's fulness which we call sanctification.

In that sense of the word, then every disciple should be known as being sanctified. Each waking hour should find one positioned to God that nothing impedes the truth which God would communicate through that person. I do not mean that one has to be praying every hour, nor constantly present in church. But I do mean that one's whole life should be a holy requiem offered up for whatever use God designs.

Human life is much like a block of granite. We come into this world with all types of potentialities. In some there is locked up a musician. In other artists, professionals, amateurs, novices . . . and in a few the spark of genius. But in every case these potentialities are in the raw stage, awaiting the mallet, chisel, scalpel, brush, tuning fork, or the long rigors of discipline, practice, research, heartache and endeavor. In no realm of consideration is this truth more binding than in Christian discipleship. Sanctification is the mallet and chisel which must be in the divine

¹(*Miscellanies, Literary and Historical* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921) I, 246-47).

sculptor's hand. He works away at the block of human granite shaping, chiseling, polishing, schooling . . . all for the purpose of perfecting a resilient quality workman. To say that one is an active Christian and at the same time not in the throes of this process is to give vent to that which is unquestionably false.

UNFINISHED PROCESS

Many a rock quarry or sculptor's studio reveals pieces of granite that were begun but left unfinished for various reasons. Friends, how about yourselves? Are you in that number that once knew the joy of trying—trying to be somebody and to do something worthwhile in this world? Then a variety of conditions, circumstances, and attitudes crept in through the years and lo, today, your marble is unfinished. As a matter of fact, many have not touched their spiritual lives by any chisel of effort in so long that they nearly have forgotten what I am talking about. Some called it back-slidden. God calls it sorriness . . . a pathetic, inexcusable sorriness. One can never be filled with the fulness of God unless he thinks enough of the process to continue it.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is the prescription . . . the process by which sanctification is wrought is faith in the Son of God. Life in the flesh results in nothing but biological functions if it is not coupled to that which is superlative . . . even the Son of God. This coupling is a virile, overpowering faith which makes flesh significant when dedicated to God.

When that process goes on with a minimum of interruptions, then the allure of what is recorded in the seventh chapter of Revelation gains new significance. The writer of that memorable drama says, "There are they which came out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb." Who? The people who travailed through much testing . . . the people who turned the other cheek and failed to fight back

while not insisting on their rights . . . the folks who could have made a fortune had they stooped to the shady deal . . . the fine men and women who preferred the things of the spirit over the things of the world . . . those who refused to run when a fight for the right was ensuing . . . these, then are those who washed their garments white. Little wonder they are found in the company of God's redeemed.

This is the process of being sanctified through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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