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Theories About Sanctification

(From the Book "Entire Sanctification")

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No man can make an honest pretense to believe the Bible, and not believe in some sort of sanctification. According to Cruden's Concordance, the words "sanctify," "sanctified," and "sanctification" may be found at least one hundred and sixty-four times in the Bible. So, when one declares he does not believe in sanctification, he simply exposes either his ignorance or his infidelity concerning the Bible. In order to believe the Bible, we are bound to believe in some sort of sanctification. Practically, there are but six theories regarding this experience.

The first theory is that justification and, sanctification are experienced simultaneously; that whoever is justified is also sanctified. Those holding this theory may be heard to say they 'got all when they were converted.'

But this theory is contrary to the Scripture. Every command, exhortation, prayer, and promise in the Bible touching the subject of sanctification is for Christians—never for sinners. If Christians are sanctified when justified, why should sanctification be subsequently enjoined upon them?

In writing to the Corinthian church (I Cor. 3:1-3), the Apostle Paul addressed them as "brethren"; said they were "babes in Christ"; and declared he had fed them "with milk." A "babe in Christ" is just as certainly in Christ as an adult in Christ; there must have been a spiritual birth—a spiritual being—they could not have received spiritual food and nourishment.

In verse three, however, he says, plainly, "Ye are yet carnal," which undeniably is evidence that they were not yet wholly sanctified, though they were "in Christ." In the first chapter and fourth verse, he said, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." According to this they had the grace of God given them by Jesus Christ; more, they had such measure of grace given them that the apostle found it an occasion for continuous thanksgiving.

The second theory is that sanctification is attained by a growth in grace. This theory is an absurdity for the reason that we can never grow impurity out of the heart. If sanctification were by growth, then time is a factor, for all will admit that it requires time to grow. If time is a factor, then we may raise the question, "How much time is required?" "How long must we grow in grace before we are wholly sanctified?" Suppose one might be said to grow into sanctification in two years and that that individual should die at the expiration of one year. It might then be said that he had come by the process of growth, just halfway to sanctification. Would not the last half of sanctification, of necessity, have to take place instantly? And if the last half of sanctification might be completed instantly, why not the first half? To hope for sanctification by growth is hoping in a theory that

can never be realized. Sanctification is plainly a "divine act," obtained instantaneously through an entire consecration and through faith. As well speak of growing into justification as growing into sanctification. As is the former, so is the latter. It is something Jesus must do for us. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

The third theory is that sanctification takes place in death—that no one can be sanctified in this life. We answer that death has no saving efficacy. Satan is the direct cause of sin, and sin is the cause of death. One could hardly hope for deliverance from sin from this source. While doubtless some persons have received the grace of sanctification on their deathbed, it was evidently by the cleansing blood of Jesus, and not by death. If the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from sin when dying, why might it not cleanse us from all sin while in life? Has the blood of Jesus more cleansing power when a man is dying than when he is living? Certainly not. Not a single passage of Scripture can be cited that gives us promise of salvation or cleansing at the time of dissolution. The Epistle of Jude was written "to them that are sanctified" (Jude 1:1). If they were not sanctified until death, this epistle must have been written to them after they were dead, for it was written after they were sanctified. But this verse says, they were "sanctified by God the Father," not by death.

The fourth theory is that sanctification is a sort of post-mortem affair, and takes place after death, in Purgatory. While the priest may absolve the sinner from his guilt, it is necessary that he should nevertheless pass through purgatorial fires in order to be thoroughly refined and freed from sin. But the Bible makes no mention of such a cleansing. It teaches that as death leaves us the Judgment will find us.

The fifth theory is the Calvinistic, Keswickian Antinomian theory of repression and imputed holiness as opposed to the Wesleyan theory of eradication of inbred sin and imparted holiness. Says one of their writers, "He who is our Great High Priest before God, is pure, without sin. God sees him as such, and he stands for us who are his people, and we are accepted in him. His holiness is ours by imputation. Standing in him, we are in the sight of God, holy as Christ is holy, and pure as Christ is pure. God looks at our representative, and he sees us in him. We are complete in him who is our spotless and glorious Head."

According to this theory, the individual can in reality never become holy. While he within himself is not holy, Christ's holiness is imputed to him, and for His sake the

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