



*the
Golden
Candlestick*

THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Editorial

**OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE
SANCTIFICATION**

T. Austin-Sparks

Contents

1. The Redemption Of Our Bodies, editorial 3
2. Objective and Subjective Sanctification, T. Austin-Sparks 13

THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Reading:

"... we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23).

Introduction

The life of the apostle Paul is an example of having the right attitude towards eternity on a daily basis. In the light of Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection and eternal glory his own perilous life becomes very meaningful and purposeful. He considers every day a step closer to the fulfilment of his calling. Day by day his "inner man" is renewed as he sees his "outer man" wearing out (2 Cor. 4:16). He actively lives out (obeys) his calling, knowing the inevitable consequences of hardship and taking this hardship as a sign that he is going the right way. He writes, "... provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17). But he also says, "... we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). We can imagine that he longs for relief and would like to escape suffering and discomfort, but Paul himself comes to the conclusion that it is better, after all, to toil on and expect Jesus to return during his lifetime. It is redemption that Paul has in mind, which is not the release of our souls from our earthly existence and to enter the presence of God when we die, but the salvation of our souls and the glorification of our bodies. It

is the liberation of our bodies from corruption. This is the transformation or resurrection, the Day of Redemption, when Christ returns to claim His Kingship over creation. For the Christian death implies rest indeed, but only until the time of receiving the incorruptible inheritance for which God created him, the final “rest”.

A struggle

Romans 8 is one of the three instances in the letters of Paul where he writes about his longing to experience redemption. He does not consider death to be a relief from suffering and the way to escape one’s earthly existence, but an enemy (vs. 38, 1 Cor. 15:26). His message is — very positively — to live according to the Spirit, so that — guaranteed — God “will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you” (vs. 11, choosing the accusative text variant, as in the NIV). The ability to do so, Paul has argued in previous chapters of the letter, is pure grace. It is a gift. The ground of the dynamics of this life in the Spirit is what Christ Jesus has done for humanity by His death and resurrection, resulting in righteousness (see vs. 10¹, which John Owen calls “imputed righteousness”). Practically this life in the Spirit boils down to “obedience of faith” (1:5, 16:26) and even in obeying the believer gets help. We must be very clear that living in the Spirit never happens automatically, but that there is much help from the Lord in different ways. Paul uses different metaphors to describe the dynamics of this “newness of life” (6:4, 7:6). Knowing what Christ has accomplished for us we ought to become slaves of righteousness (6:18-19), we are debtors (8:12). We have been made God’s children; the Spirit is the Spirit of sonship. There is the help of the Spirit in our prayers (8:26). There is the example of Jesus to be followed (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6; Phil. 2:1-11), the example of Paul and other Christians (1 Cor. 11:1, Phil. 3:17) and there is always the comparison between our current suffering and our future glory that helps us enormously to

¹ For an argument in favour of the rendering, “the Spirit is life because of righteousness” ((N)KJV, ESV, NRSV) see G.D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, Baker Academic, 1994, pp. 550-552.

persevere (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:18)—the prospect of becoming fellow-heirs with Christ and being “conformed to the image of His Son”. Moreover, there is the awareness that both the Spirit and Christ Jesus are interceding for us (8:26-27; 34). There is the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) and above all there is the overwhelming love of God (Rom. 8:39) and His faithfulness. The list is endless and the Spirit keeps on reminding us of all these precious things. It is a struggle, but it is “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

The other two instances of Paul’s consenting to suffer for the sake of the gospel rather than to die and go to be with the Lord can be found in his letter to the Philippians and in 2 Corinthians 4-5. The metaphors he uses in 2 Corinthians of tents, dwellings and clothes must have explained to the Corinthian Christians what he meant to say to them, but for us they may not be as helpful, as the variety of translations and interpretations reveal. But if we keep in mind what he writes to the believers in Philippi that he is “hard pressed between the two” (Phil. 1:23) — to go to be with the Lord or to stay alive and serve Him —, we will understand 2 Corinthians 4-5 correctly and be able to follow his example (Phil. 3:17). Paul elaborates the nature of his struggle in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. 3:10-21), which can be taken as a parallel of 2 Corinthians 4-5 and explains what he means by “the redemption of our bodies” in Romans 8:23.

Paul suffers for the sake of the gospel and longs to be with the Lord, or “to be absent from the body” (2 Cor. 5:8) — he is not a fakir. On the other hand he clearly states that he does not want to die (“... not that we would be unclothed ...”, vs. 4). He would rather experience the final redemption soon (“... but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”), without having to go through hardships and eventually death. However, he knows that it is necessary for him to stay in his earthly “tent”, that is his mortal body, to fulfill the task God has given him. This causes him to choose to go the hard way, spreading the gospel and serving the saints under persecution and on dangerous journeys. Obeying God’s call entails suffering, but he knows that

that is included in the “package” of grace and salvation (see Phil. 1:27-30).

When Paul writes that he would rather not be at home in the body and away from the Lord, but the opposite, to be away from the body and at home with the Lord, he does not mean to say that it is his aim that his soul goes to heaven after he dies and live as a kind of ethereal glorified being there for ever². The best thing, he says, would be to be “overclothed” with a heavenly body, a body *from* heaven — to be transformed even before he dies. To be found naked — that is, to die — remains an awful thing to him, in spite of the happy prospect of being in the Lord’s presence and being freed from suffering and sinful inclinations. It does not really matter to him what will happen to him, as long as he can fulfill “this ministry” (2 Cor. 4:1). To have to endure hardship will not effect his ambition³ to spread the gospel (which includes building up the Church); by any means he wants to please the Lord. This is the way in which Paul explains or rather defends what he calls “this ministry” against accusations of being inconsistent (2 Cor. 1:17-23), being unfit to teach (2 Cor. 10) and against charlatan apostles (2 Cor. 11:13).

It is resurrection that keeps him going. Resurrection is both his message and his sustaining power and motivation. This may surprise us, as our own gospel message rarely contains the theme of resurrection. Our message is usually about “going to heaven” (or hell) after one dies. We consider death to be a release from earthly existence and the gateway — for the believer — to a state of everlasting happiness. According to Paul his preaching is in vain if there is no resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15). The fact that we do not preach resurrection may betray that our minds have been influenced by dualistic philosophies that despise the material world over against the spiritual world. This is a serious anti-gospel error.

2 To our understanding the phrase “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” does not imply destination but origin, which is supported by the following verses, in which Paul expresses his longing to be clothed with τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, literally, “that from heaven”, and be “further clothed”.

3 2 Cor. 5:9 (φιλοτιμέομαι, to strive, to make it one’s honour to do something; the ESV renders, “we make it our aim”).

Dualism

Paul must have known something about the dualistic worldviews that prevailed within the Hellenistic culture of his day, as his debate with the people in Athens shows (Acts 17). The idea of resurrection was ridiculous in their eyes, probably because the material world was, according to them, inferior to, of a lower order than, the world of the gods and spirits. Paul presents the living God to them as the Creator, "the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth" and "He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything". Apart from everything else that is recorded in this passage of what Paul says about humanity, God and Jesus, this is already refuting the Athenians' worldview concerning matter, soul and spirit. Later, in his letters, Paul would argue against strong dualistic influences that lingered on in different forms in the minds of his Greek brothers and sisters in Christ, philosophies that were preached by false teachers. Even among diaspora Jewish sects influential forms of dualistic mysticism existed in Paul's days (like Philo). Dualism is still a strong philosophy (like neoplatonism) in our own generation which effects our minds, theology, Bible interpretation and daily lives. We sing along, "This World Is Not My Home" and "I'll Fly Away", to which we can say amen, but it is not the gospel. These kind of songs more or less glorify the escape from troublesome earthly existence, which is understandable (especially when they are composed by plantation slaves), but their message is foreign to the gospel. It is not wrong to sing them, but they should not be sung with a form of dualism of body and spirit in mind. Take bodily resurrection out of the gospel and you have nothing left (see 1 Cor. 15). Our bodies, though still corruptible because of the fall, and creation as a whole, are God's masterpiece. We have to get rid of the slightest idea that matter is of a lower order than the invisible creation. Any form of dualism, including that of soul and spirit⁴, is a gross insult to the Creator.

⁴ Some argue for dualism of soul and spirit on the ground of Hebrews 4:12, but this completely misses the point the author wants to make in that passage.

Hope

To the believers in Rome Paul writes about “what we see” and “what we do not see” (Rom. 8:24-25). Christians should hope for what they do not see. Our dualistic minds tend to interpret this with “visible” versus “invisible”, “material” versus “immaterial” or “natural” versus “spiritual”, but this is not what Paul means at all. What he means is “actual” versus “future”⁵. In 2 Corinthians 5 he describes it as “walking by faith and not by sight” and in Philippians 3:12, speaking about the resurrection, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” The Christian hope is not to hover around in a spiritual realm forever and every now and then shake mother’s ethereal hand. To have some idea of what resurrection life in glory will look like⁶ we can have the garden of Eden in mind. The book of Revelation provides us with rich imagery as well.

The hope of the Christian is resurrection, the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). It is the heart of the gospel (see Rom. 1:4). It is the truth for which Paul was arrested and trialled (Acts 23:6, 24:21, 26:6). In his book *The Insanity of God* Nik Ripken shows the cost some Christians pay for being faithful to the Lord makes sense only in the light of resurrection and that, the other way around, there is no resurrection without — figuratively speaking — crucifixion. The Christian life is full of seeming contradictions.

Resurrection power

This naturally impossible life can only be explained by resurrec-

5 In 2 Corinthians 4:18 Paul explains ‘seen versus unseen’ by ‘for the moment’ and ‘temporal’ versus ‘eternal’, referring to the glory that awaits the suffering believer, as in Romans 8:17-18.

6 The parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16) is sometimes taken as a basis on which to form afterlife theology, but this is not the purpose for which Jesus told the parable, so it is safer not to do so and not to be distracted from the message the passage conveys.

tion power operating in the believer and in Christian communities. Resurrection is already at work, not only in the heavily persecuted gospel preacher, but in every Christian, in daily routine, at work, at school and at home. Paul writes about it in different contexts, but always within the perspective of eternal glory, never, as far as we know, as an isolated supernatural manifestation. To the believers in Rome he writes about it both in the context of righteous living and of perseverance. The context of the Corinthian letters is his own ministry of the gospel and its life-changing effect. In Ephesians there is an aspect of the position of the Church within pagan society. In Philippians there is an emphasis on joy in the midst of suffering. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, but, again, never disconnected from the redemptive work and “the day” of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ own miracles were in fact object lessons of resurrection and signs that the Kingdom of God was at hand. They were a foretaste of the big final restoration of all things. Not only was health restored and were disabilities healed, but livelihood in all its aspects was brought to normality. Resurrection power and the work of the Holy Spirit are inextricably bound up with the Kingdom of God, or, in Paul’s words, with “the furtherance of the gospel”. The Holy Spirit shows what happens when God is present in and among people. It is in and by the presence of God — by the Holy Spirit — that believers are empowered to overcome the power of sin and the evil one. Living the Christian life is to get to know this resurrection power more and more (Eph. 1:20), which is to get to know God Himself.

The nature of resurrection power is manifold. It may be sensational or it may not be sensational. It is sound for Christians to have an expectation of sensational manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit, individually and especially in their gatherings, but the Lord may allow us to go through periods that we experience as dry or even dark, times in which the Lord seems to hide Himself. He is sovereign and may find it fit to test our faith. In general He lets His children have foretastes of eternal glory and makes His presence tangible. He often provides a “way of escape” mercifully

and unexpectedly (1 Cor. 10:13) and teaches us to “draw near to the throne of grace” (Hebr. 4:16); He is always there for us, even in the things we think are too small or too trivial for the Almighty to be bothered with.

God’s presence

God gave the apostles the task to explain the implications of the presence of God in the Holy Spirit among His people, especially with the second coming of Christ in mind. They knew it could be a little confusing and that a correct understanding of the Kingdom of God was absolutely vital for the strength and spiritual maturity of the Church. Christians are to represent the Kingdom of God as a reality, not as something that will come some day.

The presence of God in the Holy Spirit is something the disciples did not understand immediately, as Thomas’ question in John 14:5 shows, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” The answer seems so obvious, that we may wonder why Thomas is asking the question in the first place. Jesus has just said that He is going to prepare a place for them “in My Father’s house”. Does Thomas not know that the house of God is heaven? Had he not learned to pray, “Our Father who is in heaven”? He must have understood Jesus’ speech as metaphorical. And it is indeed “in figures of speech” (John 16:26,29) that Jesus speaks to him at this point. Jesus is not saying here that He will come again to take His followers to heaven, away from the earth, as a kind of rapture. In that case Jesus would not be speaking to the disciples who are now with him, but — over their heads — exclusively to the future generation of disciples that will experience the parousia (taking the position for the moment that there will be such a thing as a rapture)⁷. We can say with certainty that by “My Father’s house”

⁷ In his excellent and amazingly compact commentary R.V.G.Tasker (TNTC, 1st edition 1960, reprinted 1992) mentions as context the need for the disciples to be comforted because of Jesus’ imminent death. He suggests that Paul’s encouraging words to the Thessalonians about Jesus’ second coming

Jesus means heaven, but “heaven” in the sense of God’s presence, that which the writer of the letter to the Hebrews calls “the throne of grace” (4:16) and “the holy places” (10:19). It is Jesus’ ultimate desire that His disciples will be where He is, that is in glory (John 14:3, 17:24), but here Jesus is just saying that the way to accomplish that — bringing His disciples into the presence of God and unto glory — is His death and resurrection (He *is* the way *Himself*). His death is the way in which He prepares the place for them in the presence of God⁸, His resurrection is the way in which He will take His disciples to Himself, to glory. His resurrection is “I will come again”, which includes, to our understanding, His appearing to His disciples before the Ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His second coming. The process of taking His disciples to Himself is something that has already gone on for almost two thousand years and will have its consummation at His second coming. The comforting element of Jesus’ speech is not the nice thought that there is heaven after *their* death, but that there is heaven — life in the presence of God — after *His own* death. What is relevant for everyday life of any generation of believers is that the resurrection of Jesus has brought them into the presence of God while they are still in the world. This is the field of tension the community of believers is living in. They are in the world, but not of the world. Jesus does not ask the Father to take them out of the world, but that He keeps them from the evil one (John 17).

What is essential in this being kept from the evil one is that His death and resurrection will make them one, as one people of God,

(1 Thess. 4:13-18) are echoing this section of Jesus’ farewell discourse. However, he probably does not suggest that the parousia is the only application of “I will take you to Myself”, because that would not be a solace for the eleven disciples at all; none of them would experience Jesus’ second coming in their lifetime. It is unlikely that Tasker completely overlooks the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus’ words, so that they would make no sense to the actual hearers, the eleven disciples. Tasker probably means to say that the two passages have a similar comforting goal. D.A. Carson (PNTC, 1991) also looks at this need for comfort as the context and says (with diplomacy), “Unlike some other passages that look to the parousia, this one focuses less on apocalyptic elements and the winding-up of the cosmos (...) than on the comfort to be enjoyed by believers in the presence of God ...”

8 By stating that there are many rooms in God’s presence Jesus refers to the Father’s love, which is a key theme of the whole discourse (see 14:21, 16:27, 17:23,26); it is not His intention to give a detailed description of a heavenly home with millions of rooms.

sanctified unto God (John 17:17-19). The unity of believers, accomplished by Jesus' death and resurrection and practiced in mutual love by believers is the testimony of the Church in and to the world (see the context of the whole discourse of John 13-17 and John's letters as well; see also Paul's letter to the Ephesians). The calling of the Church with regard to the world is to show the reality of Jesus' resurrection, its truth in practicality. It is to show that it is possible that a holy God lives among ordinary people and that it is His very purpose to do so in eternity. The Church is God's object lesson of His "manifold wisdom" and grace in Christ Jesus.

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE SANCTIFICATION

T. Austin-Sparks

(From a conference held in July 1933)

Reading:

Ex. 29:42,43; Lev. 6:8-13; Heb. 9:13,14; 10:10-14; 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

It is on my heart, I believe by the Lord's leading, to say a little word in connection with the Holy Spirit's work in the believer especially in connection with sanctification. I feel that it is important that we should be as clear as possible on the matter of sanctification. It is possible to be anything but clear on that matter and to be very confused. And so without attempting to enter upon the profundities of this matter, I feel that we should consider it along two lines in which it is open to us in the Word of God; that is, the objective and the subjective. And we begin with a brief word about what we now call objective sanctification.

Practically all the passages which we have read have to do with objective sanctification. That is, they have the new birth in view and not the subsequent life of the believer in progressive sanctification, and they make clear to us this one basic and very important truth, that in the commencement of our spiritual life in our new birth we were sanctified. You will immediately see the importance of that because sanctification is often considered to be something which is entirely bound up with the life after conversion, after salvation. Now we must put that right at once and see that there is a very great deal of Scripture such as that which we have just read, which shows that there is a sanctification which belongs to the beginning

of the spiritual life of the believer. These passages are retrospective to something which took place when we first believed in Christ.

The Hebrew letter contains several of them, the first in the second chapter: "For both he that sanctified and they that are sanctified are all of one." Then later we are told that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." By the offering of the body of Jesus Christ we were set apart unto God, and when He said, as recorded in John 17: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself", He meant that in sanctifying, or consecrating, or setting Himself apart at that point which He had there reached in His cross, He was doing it on behalf of those referred to in the chapter, who believed. The fragment: "... for their sakes" does not mean merely that He did it as apart from them and on their behalf, but He did it as them. He included them in His self setting apart unto God, or in the sanctifying of Himself. And that same prayer contained a petition that they all might be sanctified. The thought in the Master's mind was that there should be a sanctified company presented to the Father in His own inclusive Person when He sanctified Himself on their behalf, for them, for their sakes. And that is only the pre-Calvary way of stating this post-Calvary word in the letter to the Hebrews: "... we have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And then the apostle in that passage in the Corinthian letter says: "... but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." That is a past tense and a complete thing.

Sanctification is first of all a thing which is complete and final in the Lord Jesus for us, to be apprehended by faith, and the whole question of progressive sanctification must be based upon that, otherwise we are all at sea and we make no progress at all. We are taught that we have a threefold sanctification in our initial relationship to the Lord. Firstly, we are sanctified when we are called. The word is: "Called saints". Not called to be saints, but called saints; and a saint is one who is set apart for God, not on a glass window

but set apart for God here in a wicked world, living apart from the world unto God, while in it. That is a saint. The halo may be seen in heaven but it may not be seen here on earth. "Called saints"; and that could be quite properly translated: "Called sanctified", "Called separated", "Called God's", and anything and everything which is God's is sanctified. God has never yet accepted anything unsanctified. The whole of Scripture from beginning to end bears down upon that, that God never looks at anything unsanctified; whatever comes to Him and finds acceptance is wholly sanctified, that is, separated from every kind of contamination from evil. So that by calling we are sanctified.

Have you been called? "... and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Have you been called? Have you heard the call of God in your heart? Do you know what it is to be called of God? That call was not merely and only: "Come unto Me" in some kind of mechanical sense of being a follower of the Lord Jesus to try and live up to His example. That call represented your utter and complete sanctification in Christ; in that call there was final sanctification in the Lord Jesus. Now this is important. I stay to stress it because of the erroneous and altogether inadequate apprehension of a multitude of people that sanctification is the higher life and conversion is the lower life. Sanctification is not the higher life in that mechanical sense. Sanctification is in Christ immediately you are born again and there never will be any more sanctification in Christ after the day you are born again than on that day. It may be wrought out progressively but it is final in Christ. The day we come into Christ we are as sanctified in Him as ever we shall be. The Lord takes responsibility for the rest if we are obedient. If we are taken out of this world before there has been time to work out all sanctification in us we are accounted perfect. It is important for you and me that we have our feet squared down upon the fact that from the moment we believe we are wholly sanctified in Christ; sanctification is complete. The importance of recognizing that is also seen here, that there are so many who think of sanctification

as optional because it is the higher life, and that the higher life is an optional thing. That may be one of the faults of our mechanical system, of a necessary evil such as a convention. A convention system can be a necessary evil in this sense, that it so often sets up this difference between what is called the ordinary Christian life and the extraordinary Christian life. But if we saw what the New Testament teaches we should see that the normal Christian life is a wholly sanctified life, and a worldly Christian or a half sanctified Christian is a lie, and that from the very day that we are born again, in God's thought we are intended to be wholly sanctified in Christ and from that moment to live a life wholly unto God.

Nine-tenths of our time is occupied in clearing up the unsanctified messes in Christian lives because there has been a failure to recognize from the beginning that sanctification is regarded as complete in us in Christ. We are sanctified by our very calling. We are called saints. We are sanctified by Blood. The first is the work of the Father; we are sanctified by calling. We are called by God the Father, sanctified by the Father. The second, sanctified by Blood, is the work of the Son. The passages in Exodus, Leviticus, and then in Hebrews as the New Testament exegesis of the Old, bear upon this sanctification by Blood. There is the work of the Lord Jesus in the whole burnt offering, the shedding of Blood; and then we are sanctified by new birth.

Calling, Blood, New Birth. Most of you will be seeing differences which are important. Do not get these three things mixed up. They are not the same. They may come together but they are not the same. The calling is a first step. The next step is the Blood, apprehended, appropriated by faith. In the same instant the Spirit may regenerate and bring about new birth, but they are steps, not one movement, towards a new creation, and it would be valuable I think, especially to those who are laying foundations in the knowledge of God's Word, to pursue these discriminations between the calling and the work of the Blood, and then the new birth.

Now in new birth we are sanctified, and that is the work of the Spirit. So you have got the Trinity cooperating in bringing about this

state of initial sanctification. Sanctified by God the Father, sanctified by God the Son, sanctified by God the Holy Spirit. A threefold work of sanctification right at the beginning of the spiritual life and when the whole Trinity comes in at the beginning of our spiritual history you have a large background, foundation of our Christian life. It is a tremendous thing to be saved. The Trinity has cooperated, but in salvation sanctification is implicit; these two things go together.

One further word in this connection. It is necessary that you and I should be on that foundation because all the subsequent work of sanctification in us depends entirely upon this initial basic thing. I feel I am just touching now a point which, if only it could be lit up for you by the Holy Spirit, will be of tremendous value and deliver you, or others through you, from a great deal of confusion and distress. We want the actual outworking of sanctification in our hearts, in our lives. We groan for it, we crave for it, we pray for it, we yearn for it, we beseech the Lord for it. We work ourselves up into an awful state of distress, unrest and agony and we lose our joy and peace until our spiritual life becomes a burden. A burden comes upon us because of this question of sanctification in our lives. Now we come into an entirely false position, and we might be saved from most of that (I say most, perhaps not all because often the question of sanctification becomes acute by reason of some disobedience or failure to go on with the Lord in a particular matter upon which He has put His finger) but we might be saved a great amount if only we had an objective foundation set before we started upon the subjective. I mean that we must come into God's rest in Christ about the matter of our full sanctification in Christ before ever the Holy Spirit can take up the work of carrying out what is in Christ, in us, because until we come there we are denying the cross, the Blood, all that Christ has done. Immediately we have a big question about ourselves (provided there is no real controversy with the Lord upon some matter upon which He has convicted us) immediately we get such doubts about ourselves we are questioning the work of the cross and the completeness of Christ's work. In those passages in Hebrews which take up Exodus and Leviticus you have this: "we

have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." That is finality.

The argument of Hebrews 9 is that away back then it was day by day, year by year offering, the many offerings continuously, that is the word, "continuously". Now it is one offering once for all, and there is no more offering for sin. What does that mean? By the once for all offering of Himself He has sanctified us once for all; sanctification in Him has come to an end. In the cross of the Lord Jesus sanctification is perfected for us objectively. We have to come to that rest, to that settled place where we grasp that by faith, and until we have got there the enemy has just the ground he is always looking for to wreck our spiritual life. He harasses us with worries, doubts and fears, and brings in all kinds of questionings about our acceptance, our standing, our fellowship with God. The only way in which to cut that ground completely from underneath the enemy is to come to a settled place about the once for all offering of Jesus Christ by which we are sanctified. If only it could be established in every heart there would be much more joy, for the spiritual life ought to be a matter of more joy than it is; if only this could be established that we begin our spiritual life from a perfect state. Christ is perfected. The Lord Jesus can never be one fragment more perfect than He is today. He is perfect, and He is perfect in the presence of God as us, including us. The very first benefit of that to faith is justification. That is, you are made just in the sight of God, in Him; not in what you are but in Him. Oh, for faith to take hold of that, of what the Lord Jesus is for us to God. That would settle us, there would be rest.

The Holy Spirit cannot take up His work of making what is true in Christ progressively true in us until we have reached that rest, because the Holy Spirit works upon a thing that is settled and He must have that ground. The Holy Spirit starts work on the Sabbath. It is His one long dispensational day of activity, that is, rest from all labours giving the energy to work. That sounds strange but you understand. God has ceased from His labours in the cross of the Lord Jesus. When Christ is perfected, God has perfect humanity in

His presence, and now God is working from perfection to perfection, not from imperfection to perfection, and you and I in Christ from this very moment are in Christ perfect. If you and I die tonight and there is no controversy with the Lord upon the question of obedience, we stand perfect in the presence of God. That is God's responsibility. Rest on that. Our business is to see that today I know of nothing with which God has an argument in my life. Today sanctification for me resolves itself into this. Has the Spirit of God pointed out something as wrong? Have I said: "That goes then in the initial death, I reckon that", or do I hold on? If I hold on and refuse to be obedient to the Spirit and am called into the presence of God, that will stand against me in eternity. If today while it is called today, I have no controversy in my heart with God and He has none with me, and I go into His presence tonight, I am perfect — provided He takes me into His presence and I do not put myself there. The Holy Spirit is working from a perfect standpoint in us and that perfected standard is attributed to us while we go on in obedience. It is only disobedience that checks the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us, and if that sanctifying work goes on unchecked that point means perfection if we have been going on in the Spirit.

So many say: "If I were to die today how could I face the Lord?" The question is: "Do you know of anything the Lord has against you?". "You can get rid of all your trouble and worry, by dealing with that now on the spot. And although you may be like Paul at the end of your life: "... not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect". There may be a great deal more to be done in us if the Lord allowed the time and chose to do it, but the responsibility is with Him if He does not allow the time and all that is in Christ is put to our credit. An act of obedience brings us into the place of fellowship with God, and puts all of Christ on our side. The Lord may have been speaking about something — perhaps you have been blind to it — and then you have been obedient and oh the release that comes, the sense of freedom; your obedience to the Spirit has released what is in Christ to be put to your account.

Disobedience binds up what is in Christ so that it does not

become experimentally ours. Rest, joy, and peace are not bound up with progressive sanctification alone, these are bound up with our faith apprehension of all that is true in Christ from the beginning for us. Oh, hide that truth in your heart! That matter does not depend upon the changeableness of our soul-life. We may awake feeling as bad as ever we can, we may go through the week feeling as dead and out of touch with the Lord as possible, we may feel empty and far away but our sanctification in Christ is unaltered by any such feelings while there is obedience to the Spirit. It does not rest upon our condition or upon our feelings. It rests upon what is in the presence of God, not what is here (provided we are not disobedient to the Lord). There is no condition apart from that which alters the fact that we are sanctified in Christ. This thing has gone beyond the reach of the changeable conditions of our natural life. We have all kinds of moods and feelings. The most holy man or woman will wake up feeling anything but spiritually minded and spiritually vigorous. You may go to bed in close touch with the Lord and in the morning feel you have to begin your Christian life all over again. These are merely changing phases, feelings and other conditions, but this fact is settled beyond all those conditions in Christ to the one who exercises faith: sanctification is complete and unalterable. We need to have this in our hearts. I find it necessary to reaffirm my faith in this again and again. Physical or mental conditions or circumstantial conditions do make us feel all sorts of things; we feel different things half a dozen times a day spiritually and if we were to take these conditions into account the enemy would play havoc with us and make life a burden. I find it necessary to affirm, if I have no condemnation in my heart on the matter of obedience to the known will of God, (I may feel worthless spiritually), but in Christ I am as perfect as ever I was. It makes no difference. Get hold of that and you have the secret of triumph over the enemy; you have the basis of victory and the secret of peace, rest and joy, you have started your life with a sabbath. We are not now under the law but under grace and grace starts on the sabbath and does not finish on it, working from the position of the once and for all settled thing.

We go on a little now with the progressive sanctification side. You see the objective and final in Christ. Let us immediately remember that sanctification as a progressive thing begins with, and is entirely contingent upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Progressive sanctification is always contingent upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit's work to sanctify progressively. It is: "through sanctification of the Spirit". The Spirit has His own ways and His own means, but everything begins there by the indwelling Holy Spirit; everything comes out of that initial reality.

That passage we read in Exodus 29 is a very beautiful one. We might just look at it. Exodus 29:42-44. "It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and the Tent shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify ...". There are two things very clearly basic to sanctification. The tabernacle is sanctified, the ministry is sanctified, the altar is sanctified, everything is sanctified by two things. What are they? The continual burnt offering and the glory. What is the glory? The Shekinah cloud⁹. You see, everything had been made according to the pattern, completed and perfected, brought to finality, and then everything was dedicated through blood, sanctified, that is made holy or separated unto God by the blood. And then what happened? The cloud came over the sanctuary and abode. It was the cloud of glory and that sanctified in partnership with the blood. It is the Spirit of glory operating in association with the Blood that sanctifies.

For the moment we are considering the Holy Spirit's place in sanctification. We have already considered the place of the Blood. There is a progressiveness of the blood of course, but that is basic to the work of the Holy Spirit. Now as to the work of the Holy Spirit

⁹ See Exodus 25:8, where God says, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." The Hebrew for "that I may dwell" is *וַיִּשְׁכֶּנִי*, transliterated *wa-shā-kan-tî*, which contains the root letters *š-k-n*. This is where the word Shekinah comes from, which is not found in the Bible. It appears in the Mishnah, the Talmud and Midrash. Its feminine root may refer to the *experience* of divine presence rather than to God's presence itself (ed.).

in sanctification. It is the glory that sanctifies. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Glory. What glory? The glory of God in Christ. For it was when all things spiritually and morally were concluded and completed in Him who was the Anti-type of the tabernacle, in the presence of the Lord, the whole thing made perfect that the Spirit was to come as the Spirit of glory. Christ was then glorified. When we by faith apprehend the perfection of the Lord Jesus as ours, that is the objective side, then the Spirit of glory comes to take up His abode within to sanctify. He follows on to sanctify as the Spirit of the perfected Christ, to work out that perfection in us. He is the Spirit of glory in that sense, that He comes upon the ground of something that is perfect before the eyes of God and which we have apprehended as ours by faith. What is glory in the life? What is glory in the tabernacle, glory in the sanctuary? I need more glory in my life. I am praying for it. I expect you feel the same.

I have often wondered in recent years whether too much stress has been placed upon the subjective among us. It could only be too much if it went beyond the necessary measure of the objective. I do not think it is possible to stress the subjective too much provided you keep the two things in their right place. It is necessary for the uttermost inward application of these two things to be made. But to be saved from death, to be saved from introspection which is only a form of death, to be saved from all those things which can become a burden along the line of the subjective, necessitates a hold upon the objective, the apprehension of what Christ is for us to the Father. The spirit of glory sanctifies when there is apprehension of the completeness of Christ for us. The Spirit of glory He is and He never came to abide until things were perfect. The Old Testament has a doctrine of the Holy Spirit but it is a doctrine of coming and going and no abiding because the Holy Spirit could never abide where things were not perfect, where things were partial, incomplete; He could only come and go. But where things are perfect He abides, He comes to stay, and so the Glory takes up its abode in connection with the burnt offering. Christ's work on the cross as a complete work is the basis of the Spirit's presence. The finished work is the

basis of the Spirit's progress in us, therefore He shall abide.

Now here is another point on which we shall do well to be quite sure. You may enjoy the Lord in your heart one day and know that day without any question that the Holy Spirit is within, and you begin to enjoy the Spirit's presence so much that you begin to fear lest it will not go on, it is so good; will it last? And then that fear becomes a very real thing, almost a dark spectre as to whether the Holy Spirit really will stay. He has come today, will He be here tomorrow, or will He have gone tomorrow and I have to seek for Him to come back again and pray my heart out to recover the presence of the Holy Spirit. Don't entertain those thoughts. He has come because the work is perfected and therefore He has come to stay. The Master's own words on this matter are: "... that He may abide with you for ever (for the age)". That is longer than your life and longer than mine. "He shall abide with you." The ground of His being able to abide is that all things for Him are finished in Christ. If you and I in Christ still lack something we should still be in the Old Testament realm of things, the Spirit coming and going because there was nothing perfect upon which He could rest. No! We are in the New Testament realm. All things are complete and He can settle down; He can abide. And let us remember that any question about the Holy Spirit's abiding is a question about the completeness of Christ's work and therefore, we dishonour Calvary and dishonour the Blood, if we entertain questions as to whether the Holy Spirit will stay with us. I am not talking about feelings but faith. All our life is upon the principle of faith. Today we may know the glory; tomorrow we may have no glory consciously. There again the Holy Spirit has not gone. He is not settling upon what we are in ourselves. He is settling upon what Christ has done; He abides.

You are needing patience to bear with me in going round and round in these things, but I feel these are foundation things which must be settled. I am sure you are conscious of need in this direction, more glory, rest, assurance, victory; and victory is simply this, an adequate faith grasp of what the Lord Jesus is. That is victory. The beginning of the New Testament when they went out in triumph was

because the glory had come into their hearts, which was the Spirit of the glory of the perfected Christ. They were at rest; there was stability. Where shall we find stability? We shall find it in our faith in the Lord Jesus. Try finding stability by faith in yourself or anybody else! But it is what He is, the abiding, unchanging One in the presence of the Father whose perfection can never lose anything; faith in that. Permanence, not transience. There is nothing up and down, or down and up about the Holy Spirit; He abides in full strength of the Christ in glory. He abides for ever. So the Spirit resides in us upon the basis of what Christ has done, and done perfectly in His cross, and our acceptance of that by faith, not upon the variations of our own lives but upon the unvarying stability of the work of Calvary. The Spirit is here on that ground. The unchanging character of Christ's work is His ground of our being wrought upon and within by the Holy Spirit.

Let us ask the Lord to write these things in our hearts very deeply. The enemy is not losing any opportunities in these days. If he can bring a child of God under a sense of condemnation, if he can bring a cloud of uncertainty over the heart of any child of God he has done a tremendous thing for he has in that child of God — and to all those who take account of that child of God — struck a blow at the very work of the Lord Jesus and the very glory of Christ in the presence of the Father. Remember that as he moves in all these things it is not just that he may cast us down but that he might take the glory from his Rival in this universe, that he might spiritually and morally, if not literally, dethrone Christ. May we not succumb to that but have our feet upon the Rock, our goings established because of the strength of faith in the perfection of the work of our sanctification in Christ now, and may we walk in obedience day by day.

The purpose of this publication is to encourage God's people to lay hold on eternal life, the hope set before them, knowing that Jesus Christ, their Saviour, will soon return to establish His eternal Kingdom, "so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12).

thegoldencandlestick.nl
E-mail: gospel@thegoldencandlestick.nl