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THE SOCIETY OF THE SANCTIFIED

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11).

There are some scripture verses that speak out on certain doctrines and teachings with unequivocal clearness. They leave no room for speculation and doubt. There are others that are not so clear, which leave opportunity for debate and discussion.

There are some scripture portions that say all there is to say about a thing. I believe that this is true according to the degree of importance of a truth or a teaching. Anything that is not clearly stated in the Bible may be classified as of lesser importance. Things that are outstanding and noontide clear in word and implication may be considered of greater importance.

Certainly, the truths contained in this selection of scripture are of utmost importance to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. Not only is this truth crystal clear here, but the Bible supports this idea from Genesis to Revelation. We have here these simple eternal truths:

There is somebody, somewhere who sanctifies.

There is somebody, somewhere who is sanctified.

This experience through a blood-tie forms a union with Jesus Christ.

This union constitutes, a society of holy people of whom Christ is not ashamed.

This society, because of this kinship, becomes heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

It is not my purpose to try to prove this glorious doctrine in this sermon. I only hope to magnify some of the beauties and benefits derived from sanctification.

This is no theory. This society of sanctified people is no new thing. The idea of a separated people has been in the progress of revelation from the beginning.

It was seen in the case of the sons of God and the daughters of men.

It was seen in God's desire for a people who would be called by His name, a people who would praise Him.

It was seen in God's instructions to Abraham not to take a bride for Isaac from among the heathen.

It was seen in God's concern for Israel in Egypt, and in their relationship to other nations of the earth.

It was seen in the genealogies of men and women of faith in the Bible.

God has always insisted upon His people being a separate people – a people distinct from the world, a people marked by a certain way of life and attitude of heart. If the Bible teaches any one thing clearly, it is that regeneration and sanctification are two separate and distinct experiences.

In those far-off days when the light was dim, regeneration was not called the new birth and sanctification was not identified as such, but

always there has been the operation of that principle.

Take the case of Abraham. He was called Abram. But coming out of a deep, spiritual experience with God, he had his name changed indicating a change of character.

Jacob met God at Bethel and made a covenant with Him. More than twenty years later in a conflict with a heavenly being all night long, the dawn found him with a thigh out of joint, a new nature and a new name. No longer a deceiver, he had become a prince with God and man. This indicated a change of character.

Abraham circumcised his son the eighth day and this practice became an age-long rite in Judean religion, exemplifying cleanliness and purity and finally pointing to circumcision of the heart in the New Testament.

David showed his understanding of the demand for such an experience which would purify the heart by his many references to the subject in the Psalms. Hear him as he poses the question which has haunted man since the beginning of time:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psalm 24: 3, 4).

And again, in his own heart's cry for purity: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51: 7). After undergoing experiences in life that seemed to affect his relationship with God, David lifted up his voice in prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51: 10).

Listen to James as he instructs: "Cleanse your

hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (James 4: 8).

It cannot be without significance that when Isaiah, the prophet, saw the Lord high and lifted up, he saw his sin and cried for mercy. An angel took a coal of fire from the golden altar and touched his lips and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

These and many other such scripture passages set before us the fact that sin is a two-fold calamity and needs a two-fold remedy. Sin is a double evil. It needs a double cure. There is sin on the hands and sin on the heart.

Augustus Toplady was conscious of this dual nature of sin and so beautifully portrayed the power in the blood of Christ as sufficient to take care of the total sin question.

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

We inherited the sin principle from Adam and became transgressors by choice. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all may be made alive.

As I see it, the difference between these two grand and glorious experiences may be summed up as follows:

In regeneration, a new life is born.

In sanctification, the rite of circumcision is performed.

In regeneration, Abram leaves Ur of the Chaldees.
In sanctification, Abraham is made heir of the Promise.

In regeneration, Isaac is born in the home.

In sanctification, Ishmael is cast out.

In regeneration, Jacob meets God at Bethel.

In sanctification, Jacob becomes Israel, a prince with God.

In regeneration, your hands are cleansed.

In sanctification, your heart is purified.

In regeneration, the tree of sin is cut down.

In sanctification, the root of sin is dug up.

In regeneration, you are grafted into the vine.

In sanctification, you are purged that you may bring forth more fruit.

In regeneration, you are taken out of the world.

In sanctification, the world is taken out of you.

In regeneration, actual transgression is forgiven.

In sanctification, the carnal nature is destroyed.

In regeneration, your thinking is changed.

In sanctification, your will is surrendered.

In regeneration, your life is transformed.

In sanctification, your character is changed.

In regeneration, war is declared on sin and Satan.

In sanctification, the victory is won.

In regeneration, there is a birth.

In sanctification, there is a death and resurrection.

In regeneration, you are an adopted son.

In sanctification, you become an equal heir with Christ.

In regeneration, you part company with the world.

In sanctification, you become one with Christ.

In regeneration, "When I would do good, evil is present."

In sanctification, "There is therefore now no condemnation."

Jesus concentrated on laying the foundation of faith in the hearts of His disciples until He neared the end of His ministry. Then He called them apart and prayed for them thus: "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17: 11, 16, 17).

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul climaxes his message by saying, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly."

Jude addressed his letter to "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called."

Thus, we have the unmistakable witness of three different writers of the Bible who substantiate the fact of sanctification and the source of sanctification. This holy experience originates with a holy God, that we might become a holy people and be brought back into fellowship with that holy God.

Jesus prayed for the disciples to be sanctified. We know that they were sanctified, that God heard His Son's prayer. Thus, He prayed for every believer who would accept Christ through the preaching of the Gospel.

God told Paul that He would send him unto the Gentiles, that he might turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God that they might receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified.

Again, to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul stressed: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

It takes a sanctified life to please God – a holy life, a life set apart and separated from all the unrighteousness of the world. The holy life is an outward manifestation of inward purity. You can't counterfeit a holy life. You cannot live holy unless you have holiness of heart. This basis for fellowship is the blood tie that forms that holy society which will make up the bride of Christ.

Jesus thus created a new society – a society of the sanctified. They were called out of the old society of Jewry. They were not moved away from conflict and association with other men, but they were marked by a special likeness and oneness that would make them at home only in this kind of society.

Involvement in this kind of society cannot be stable and enduring without constant fellowship with Jesus. The common bond in this society is produced by Christ as He stamps His likeness upon the men and women who go into making up this society.

This society has a unique relationship to the world. It is in it, not of it, yet obligated to it. The prayer of Jesus was a four-fold petition:

That this society may be identified by a blood tie into bonds of unity – "that they may be one."

That this society be dedicated to the cause of righteousness.

That this society be kept from the evils of this world.

That they may be united with the great head of this society and behold and share His glory.

"That they may be one, even as the Father and I are one." This was the forming of a great family. Heretofore, they were estranged, separated, at outs, but now made one by the sacrifice of the firstborn. The blood on the door of Egypt marked and made the difference between the Egyptians and the Jews. The applied blood was the means of saving the firstborn of every family. The applied blood of the Firstborn, Jesus Christ, to the heart not only saves that individual, but also makes him one with the Trinity and with fellow Christians.

We thus become a royal society, one in unity of spirit, purpose and heart.

Christ was officially establishing a new society among men. It was His purpose to match this society against the world and by the power of unity and oneness of kind and spirit to change the world. They were commissioned not to bring men to heaven, but to bring heaven to men.

This society was here for a divine purpose. Jesus had finished His work on earth, but He left this society here to continue His work. They were to convince the world of the divinity of Jesus. They were to persuade men to believe on Jesus. They were to show forth the praise of Him who had called them out of darkness into the marvelous light. They were to convince the world that the way of the sanctified life was in every way better than the life offered by the world.

They were commanded not only to preach, but to get out there in the world and show men the religion of Christ in action, to show that they were happier than the world, that they are getting more out of life, that they are making a greater contribution to men and that the rewards are a hundredfold

in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

In the society of the sanctified, they were to be kept from the evils of the world. Christ prayed the Father not to take them out of the world. This indicates that God could have done it. But to take them out of the world would not be best for them *or* the world. Their job was to take heaven to men. They were indebted to the world and they had to stay here till the debt was paid.

Christianity doesn't have to run from the world and the devil. The word *retreat* is not in Christ's vocabulary. To take them out would constitute a miracle, but to keep them here would manifest a greater miracle of grace and the moral power of Christianity.

Christ was not afraid to trust them in the world. He here commits them to His Father to keep. They were placed in the custody of His Father. They were promised protection: not from persecution, not from criticism, not from afflictions, not from martyrdom, but from evil.

There is an eternal reward to those who join the elite society of the sanctified. In ending His prayer for the sanctification of His disciples, Jesus prayed to the Father: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:22, 24).

He is saying here in essence, "Father, I want you to let these share with us forever that glory which we shared from the foundation of the world. I have given them a little taste of it, but I want them with me in my glory on the crowning day."

We can be there on that coronation day when

Christ is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords if we are sanctified. We can join the society of the greatest and best men and women who ever walked the earth as they gather around the throne – the society of the sanctified. Together we can lift our voices in triumphant song as we sing praises to our Lord and Saviour throughout the eternal ages:

*All hail the power of Jesus' name
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.*

*Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all.*

*Let every kindred, ev'ry tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all.*

*Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all.*

—Edward Perronet