



# AN ILLUSTRATION

OF

## THE DOCTRINES

OF

# THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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UNION WITH CHRIST THE ONLY WAY TO SANCTIFICATION.

1 Cor. i. 30.—*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us  
—sanctification.*

THE world in its greatest darkness was not insensible that man's nature was corrupted, that they needed something wherewith they might please God, attain to happiness, and repair the wound which they understood their nature had got. And although that Jews and Gentiles had different devices whereby they thought this might be obtained, yet all agreed in that it behoved them to go into themselves for it, and to draw something out of the ruins of their natural powers wherewith to help themselves, thereby discovering they did not sufficiently understand the depth of the corruption of human nature. And this principle is so agreeable to corrupt reason, that God's device to bring about man's salvation from sin and misery in and by another, to wit, Christ, was to 'the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness,' ver. 23. And if we sound to the bottom, it is the same at this day to the unregenerate part of the Christian world.

In the text we have the sum of God's device for the salvation of sinners, and it centres in Jesus Christ who was crucified. We may take up the text and it in these two things.

1. That the whole of man's salvation shall be from Christ. God has made or constituted him the fountain of all salvation, from

whom it must be conveyed to all that shall partake of it. As Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over Egypt; and when the famished people cried to him for bread, he bade them go to Joseph, Gen. xli. 55. so God has dealt with the Mediator, and tells us by the gospel, Psal. lxxxix. 24. 'My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.' If we look into the ruins of the fall we may take them up under four heads, answerable to which there are remedies in Christ.

(1.) Man is ignorant naturally of the way to true happiness: he has lost God, and knows not how to find him again.—Falling into the hands of Satan, he has lost his two eyes, like Samson; gropes for the way of happiness, but cannot find it, like the Sodomites at Lot's door. Some remains of knowledge found in the ruins of the fall were improved in the world, by study, observation of the works of God, and in some by external revelation, which yet the natural darkness of the mind did pervert. And these notions, thus improved, they called wisdom. But the way of happiness by works, the only way naturally known by Adam, being blocked up by his fall, it was impossible for them by their wisdom to fall on the other way, unless we should say, that fallen man's natural knowledge could reach farther than his natural knowledge when it was whole and entire before the fall. So man's wisdom is his folly.

For remedy of this, Christ is made 'wisdom.' The treasures of wisdom and knowledge were lodged in him, Col. ii. 3. and he is constituted the grand Teacher of all that seek for eternal happiness. Therefore the philosophers and Rabbi's must lay by their books, as insufficient to point them the way to happiness, and study that body of divinity, Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily. The wise men of the world must renounce confidence in their natural abilities, draw a black score over all their attainments in their Christless state, and sit down at Christ's feet, as knowing nothing, and learn of him: and those of the shallowest capacities, giving up themselves to him, shall get 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(2.) Man is unrighteous, and cannot stand before a righteous God. His guilt binds him over to wrath, and makes him miserable before a just God, a revenger of sin. And this is so impressed on the hearts of men, that even a natural conscience sometimes makes terrible heart-quakes within him, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death.' Now, the natural man, for remedy of this, goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, to spin a righteousness out of his own bowels, and to appease the anger of God, and gain his favour, by his obedience.

But when it appears in the light of the holy law, it is nothing but as a filthy, rotten, moth-eaten garment, that cannot cover the soul before the Lord, Isa. lxiv. 7. Let them stretch it as they will, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.

For remedy of this, Christ is made *righteousness*. He, by his obedience to the law's commands and suffering the wrath it threatened, hath brought in everlasting righteousness, which is a large garment, able to cover all that betake themselves to it, for it is 'the righteousness of God; a beautiful garment, sound in every part, for it is white raiment, without the least stain, being the righteousness of the Son of God, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Therefore the most refined moralists may lay aside, in point of confidence, their highest attainments in morality, as filthy rags before the Lord; and the strictest professors and livers on earth, who follow after the law of righteousness, must renounce their inherent righteousness, and sit down naked before the Lord, to receive the imputed righteousness of Christ. And the vilest of men coming to him, shall find a righteousness in him to be communicated to them; so that they that are far from righteousness shall be wrapt up in a perfect righteousness, if they will take Christ to them as God has made him.

(3.) Man is unholy, unfit for communion with a holy God here or hereafter. His soul is dead in sin, his lusts live and are vigorous in him; so that he is no more meet for heaven than a sow for a palace. The natural man, to help himself in this point, calls together his natural powers as in a solemn day, and endeavours to set about his duty, and turn the stream of his life and conversation into the channel of the law. Some prevail this way to the reformation of their outward conversation; but there is as much difference betwixt true holiness and their attainment, as between a living body and an embalmed corpse. Others find all their endeavours to no purpose, and so they come to despair of sanctification, and therefore even lay the reins on the necks of their lusts, Jer. ii. 25. And how can it be otherwise in either of them? for, like fools or madmen, they go into the mire to wash themselves clean; the house that must be razed from the foundation, they go to patch up and repair; for in their attempts for holiness, they act as if they had need of nothing but activity to use and improve their natural abilities for sanctification; which is as opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, as to say, the cripple needs but to set himself to rise and walk, and he will be cured, is contrary to common sense: for our natural abilities will serve us no more for sanctification, than the cripple's legs will serve

him to walk. Let men learn from Job, that where the whole body is all full of boils and sores, their hands are not fit to scrape the sores on the rest of their body, being as ill themselves as any other part: therefore he took a potsherd, and scraped himself. And while to the unbelieving there is nothing pure; their very natural powers being defiled, can never purify the man.

But for remedy in this, Christ is made *sanctification*. There is a fulness of the spirit of holiness lodged in him, to be communicated to the unholy; and to him God sends the unholy sinner, that out of his fulness he may receive, and grace for grace. Therefore the most sober natural man and strictest professor, who has hammered out of his mere natural abilities, assisted by external revelation, a life blameless before the world, being estranged still to the life of faith, must know that he has but put a new face on the old man, which Christ never intended to repair, but to destroy, Rom. vi. 6; and must begin anew to attain true holiness, from and by him whom the Father has made sanctification to us. And the most polluted sinner, whose lusts are most raging, may confidently try this grand method of sanctification, which can no more fail him than God's device can fail to reach the end he designed for it.

(4.) Man by the fall is become mortal, liable to many bodily infirmities and miseries, and at length must go to the grave, the house appointed for all living. Nature could find no remedy for this. The learned Athenians mocked at the resurrection of the dead, Acts vii. 32; the Sadducees among the Jews denied it, Matth. xxii. 23. The unrenewed part of the world, who, by the benefit of external revelation, have embraced the doctrine of the resurrection, and particularly of the happy resurrection, have no other way to attain it, but what they follow to attain righteousness and sanctification; and that being insufficient to attain them, must be so also in this respect; for all their Christless endeavours leave them still under guilt and corruption; these bonds of death, wherewith the second death will draw them down into the pit, when they are raised out of their graves at the last day still hold them fast.

But man's salvation cannot be complete without a remedy for this; therefore Christ is made 'redemption,' who will give in due time deliverance to his people from misery and death, which is called 'the redemption of the body,' Rom. viii. 23. And in this sense he calls himself 'the resurrection and the life,' John xi. 25. So redemption is in him, in so far as he has got above death and the power of the grave by his resurrection, and that as a public person, thereby ensuring the happy resurrection of all that are in him. Therefore, if ever we would get our heads above these waters, we must come to him.

2. That all who partake of this salvation, must partake of it in him, by virtue of union with him: *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, &c.* As the stock is stay, strength, and sap to the branches; so is Christ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to them that are in him, or unto sinners united to him. The sap of the stock is not conveyed to branches that are not in it: neither is Christ wisdom, &c. to any but those that are in him. He is the Saviour of his body; and we must partake of his salvation as members of his body. In the old world when the deluge came on, some without the ark getting up on the tops of trees or mountains, might be safe for a while; but none but those who were in the ark were safe to the end; so men that are out of Christ may get common temporal favours from the Lord; but none but those in him receive that wisdom, &c. which is the great salvation. The lost world is the first Adam, and the natural branches of that stock. The saved world are such branches as are taken out of that dead and killing stock, and ingrafted into Christ the true vine.

This then is the grand device of salvation, that Christ shall be all to sinners, and that they must partake of all in him; which is quite opposite to our natural imaginations, and exalts the free grace of God, depressing nature. (1.) They do not help themselves, their help is in another: He is made *wisdom, &c.* (2.) They do not so much as help themselves to their helper; for it is of God, by the power of his grace, that they are brought to be in him. It is not the branch itself, but the husbandman that ingrafts it.

The doctrine I observe from the words is,

Doct. 'God's device for the sanctification of an unholy world is, that sinners unite with Christ, and derive holiness from him, whom the Father has constituted the head of sanctifying influences. Union with Christ is the only way to sanctification.'

For proof of this doctrine, consider the following scriptures, Rom. vii. 4. John xv. 5. Gal. ii. 20.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Drop a word concerning holiness derived from Christ.

II. Shew how it is derived from him.

III. Apply.

1. As to holiness, it is that disposition of heart and course of life which is conformable to God's holy law, and pleases him. In this life it is imperfect, but in the life to come it will be perfected. I shall only offer these few things concerning it.

1. True holiness is universal in respect of the commands of God, Psal. cxix. 6. 'I have respect unto all thy commandments;' the holy man making conscience of the duties of both tables of the law,

his duty to God, his neighbour, and himself, Tit. ii. 12. Whoso divide these, declare themselves to be unholy persons, who cannot see God. A profane life is a sure evidence of a profane heart, Gal. v. 19. &c.

2. True holiness is not only in external duties, but necessarily includes internal obedience of the soul to the will of God, Psal. xxiv.

3. The outward works of piety and charity will never denominate a man holy, without holy thoughts, affections, and imaginations. The heart must be a temple consecrated to God, wherein love, fear, delight in God, submission, patience, and all other parts of unseen religion, are exercised. The heart of the holy man is no more the devil's common, where thoughts go free, and lusts range at their ease, Psal. cxix. 113. 'I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love:' but it is God's inclosure, hedged about as a garden for the Lord. And though not without weeds of corruption, it is the holy man's constant work to be labouring to root them up.

3. In true holiness there is a bent, inclination, and propensity of heart, to the acts of obedience to God. The spirit, that is, the new nature, has its lustings, as well as the flesh, Gal. v. 17. By Adam's fall the hearts of men got a wrong set, a bent and propensity to evil, Rom. viii. 7. Hos. xi. 7. Now, in sanctification it is bent the other way, towards God and godliness, 2 Thess. iii. 5. that as the needle in the compass, touched with a good loadstone, turns towards the north, so the heart, touched by sanctifying grace, inclines Godward and Christward. Whatever actions are done without this, are not holy actions, nor can they please God; for he that sees the heart, will never be pleased with those duties to which the man's heart does not kindly incline; for in effect it is but forced obedience, and he hates robbery for burnt-offering.

4. As the love of God is the great comprehensive duty of holiness, love is the fulfilling of the law; so love runs through all the duties of religion, to give them the tincture of holiness, Heb. vi. 10. And without this, should a man give all his goods to the poor, it profiteth nothing. Where self-love is the domineering principle, their duties are in God's account serving themselves, and not him. Holy duties are the obedience of a child who loves his father, and therefore serves him; not the obedience of a servant, who loves himself, and therefore serves for his wages.

5. True holiness is influenced by the command of God. The will of God is not only the rule, but the reason, of a holy life, John v. 39. Sanctification binds over the soul to the will of God, that it may follow duty, because it is his will. Though a man receive a scripture-truth, if he receive it not because God has said it, but

upon principles of reason, his receiving it is not faith, for that is an assent upon the divine testimony. So if a man do a good thing, but not because God has commanded it, the action is no holy action, Psal. cxix. 115.

6. True holiness has for its chief end the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. He that is the first cause of all goodness, must needs be the last end of it. And God being the chief good, loves himself above all, and acts for himself. Hence holy persons, being partakers of the divine nature, as they are holy, they will love God above all, and act for him and his glory; for the divine nature, wherever it is, will still move to exalt God above all. So that Sanctification makes a man's actions still centre in God, so far as it does prevail. The want of this mars a man's life and actions, so far as they are not holy, but selfish, Zech. vii. 6.

7. *Lastly*, True holiness is universal. Sanctifying grace seeks through the whole man, and the whole of his course.

(1.) Mortification is universal, Gal. v. 24. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The law of God is a chain of many links, and he that draws one to him draws all. He that kills a serpent, not out of any particular quarrel against it, but against the whole kind of them, will set himself to kill all of them that he discovers and can reach; so he that is truly sanctified is set against and endeavours to mortify and kill all sin, as sin, and because it is sin; and every lust and corruption, even the most darling, that he can discover in himself, he will bring forth to execution, and put them all to death. It is no true mortification where one lust is spared. A man in some sickness may lose the power of a leg or an arm: but had it been death, he would have lost the power of all together.

(2.) Vivification is universal, 2 Cor. v. 17. As when the body of Christ was raised, there was life put into every member; so when the soul is raised to live the life of holiness, the image of God is repaired in all its parts, and the soul embraces the whole yoke of Christ, so far as it knows the same. So that sanctification sets a man on every known duty. The holy man is holy in his dealings with God and with men; not a pretender to piety, and a renouncer of honesty. He is holy alone, and holy in company: for though a man can put on or lay by a wooden leg, and carve it as he will, he cannot do so with a limb of his body.

II. I shall shew how this holiness is derived from Christ, according to the grand device of infinite wisdom for the sanctifying of an unholy world. For clearing which, consider these few things.

1. God made the first Adam holy, and all mankind was so in him,

Ecl. vii. 29. He gave him a holy nature, endued with a propensity to good, love to the Lord, and ability to keep all the commands. Thus mankind was set up in Adam; the stock was put into his hand for himself and for his posterity, which was to be conveyed to them by natural generation; for no reason can be given why we should not have derived a holy nature from Adam had he stood, seeing we derive a corrupt nature from him having fallen.

2. Adam, sinning lost the image of God, that holiness in which he was created, and turned altogether corrupt and averse to good. For by his sin he turned off from God as his chief end, and set up himself for his chief end, which could not but infer a total apostasy. He was laid under the curse by his sin, and God the life of his soul departed from him; and so he was left dead in sin, having sinned away his life in the favour of God, and holy influences. So that all mankind are naturally dead in sin, seeing corrupt Adam could convey no nature to us but a corrupt nature, Gen. v. 3. together with the guilt of it, and the curse attending it.

3. Man's sanctification by himself thus being hopeless, for his nature being corrupted wholly, he could never sanctify his own heart or life, seeing no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause; it pleased God to constitute a Mediator, his own Son, to be the head of sanctifying influences to all that should partake of them. And again, he set up the human nature holy, harmless, and undefiled, which was united to the divine nature in the person of the Son. So Christ, God-man, was filled with the Spirit of holiness, and received a holy nature, to be conveyed from him to those that are his by spiritual generation, Eph. ii. 10. And the Mediator being God as well as man, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, there can never be wanting sanctifying influences in him who is a full fountain.

4. Jesus Christ took on him the guilt of all the elect's sins, and the curse due unto them; and these sins of theirs did hang about him till they brought him to the dust of death. But the sufferings of Christ being satisfactory, as he died for sin, so he died to sin, Rom. vi. 10. that is, he was absolutely freed from those sins of the elect wherewith he had burdened himself. This he did and suffered as a public person; and therefore the apostle tells us, Rom. vi. 6. that 'our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' For the guilt of sin and the curse being taken away, sanctification follows of course; that being removed which prevented sanctifying influences, and a communication opened betwixt heaven and the soul again, upon its reconciliation with God.



5. Though by the death and resurrection of Christ, the sanctification of his people is infallibly insured, as the corruption of all mankind was by the fall of Adam; yet we cannot actually partake of Christ's holiness till we have a spiritual being in him, even as we partake not of Adam's corruption till we have a natural being from him. And for the effecting of this union with Christ, he in the time of love sends his quickening Spirit into the soul, whereby he apprehends us; and thus there is a passive reception of Christ. And the soul being quickened, believes, and so apprehends Christ. Thus that union with Christ is made up by the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. So the soul being united to him, lives by the same spirit of holiness which is in him, and takes of his, and gives to his members for their sanctification.

6. *Lastly*, As Jesus Christ is the prime receptacle of the Spirit of holiness, as the head of all the saints; so the continual supplies of that Spirit are to be derived from him for the saints' progress in holiness, till they come to perfection. And faith is the great mean of communication betwixt Christ and us, Acts xv. 9. And thus it does, as it empties the soul of all confidence in itself for sanctification, and relies upon him for it according to his word: putting on the saints to use the means of sanctification appointed by him, yet taking their confidence off the means, and setting it on himself, Phil. iii. 3. And for the ground of this confidence it has his word, so that his honour and faithfulness are engaged for the supply of the Spirit of sanctification this way, being the way in which he has commanded us to look for it.

USE I. Of information. This lets us see,

1. The absolute necessity of holiness. When God, in the depth of infinite wisdom, laid his measures for the salvation of sinners, he had their sanctification in his eye, to bring it about by the death of his own Son. A certain evidence that there is no salvation without it. Nay, it is a principal part of our salvation, Matth. i. 21. There is more evil in sin than suffering, more in man's sin than the wrath of God. Nay, suppose a man saved from wrath, but not from sin, he is a miserable man, because of his unlikeness to God; for as happiness lies in assimilation to God, it must needs be a miserable case to be so unlike him as sin makes us.

2. In vain do men attempt sanctification without coming to Christ for it. Those that knew not Christ may attain to a shadow of holiness, but can never be truly sanctified. And those that hear the gospel, but neglect the great duty of believing and uniting with Christ, can do no duty aright, their obedience at best is but a hypocritical obedience, Tit. i. 15, 16.

3. Unholiness ought not to stop a sinner from coming to Christ, more than a disease ought to hinder a man to take the physician's help, or cold from taking the benefit of the fire. And they that will have men to attain to holiness before they believe, are as absurd as one who would have the cripple to walk before he use the cure for his lameness.

4. True faith is the soul's coming to Christ for sanctification as well as justification. For faith must receive Christ as God offers him, and he offers him with all his salvation. Now, he is made sanctification: Wherefore the soul, being willing to take Christ with all his salvation, to be sanctified, comes to him for it.

USE II. Of Exhortation. Come then to Christ for sanctification. To press this, I offer the following motives.

*Mot. 1.* If ye be not holy, ye will never see heaven.—Heaven's door is bolted on the unholy, Heb. xii. 14.—There is another place provided for the unholy impure goats.

*Mot. 2.* Ye will never attain holiness, if ye come not to Christ for it. How can ye think to thrive following another device than God's for your end? Ye may do what ye can to reform, ye may bind yourselves with vows to be holy, watch against sin, and press your hearts with the most affecting considerations of heaven, hell, &c. but ye shall as soon bring water out of the flinty rock, as holiness out of all these, till ye believe and unite with Christ. Consider,

1. While ye are out of Christ, ye are under the curse; and is it possible for the cursed tree to bring forth the fruit of holiness?

2. Can ye be holy without sanctifying influences, or can ye expect that these shall be conveyed to you otherwise than through a Mediator, by his Spirit?

3. Ye have nothing wherewith to produce holiness. The most skilful musician cannot play unless his instrument be in tune. The lame man, if he were ever so willing, cannot run till he be cured. Ye are under an utter impotency, by reason of the corruption of your nature.

*Lastly,* If ye will come to Christ, ye shall be made holy. There is a fulness of merit and spirit in him for sanctification. Come then to the fountain of holiness. The worst of sinners may be sanctified this way, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Wherefore be persuaded of your utter inability to sanctify yourselves, and receive Christ for sanctification, as he is offered to you; and thus alone shall you attain to holiness both in heart and life.