

EVAN HOPKINS

A Unique Gift to Keswick And the Church

“A life so rich in influence for God and holiness,” is Bishop Handley Moule’s natural and spontaneous description of Evan Henry Hopkins—and Bishop Moule was too restrained a man to write extravagant estimates. Such, then, was the man who wrote this classic book on the holy life, which, lacking anything more technical and elaborate, has been rightly regarded as the textbook of the Keswick Convention, which has been such a blessing to the whole Church of God since 1875.

Evan Henry Hopkins was born on September 16, 1837, in the town of Santa Ana, in New Granada (now Colombia), South America, where his parents were then.

Sanctification

In order to avoid the confusion that often exists, even in the minds of intelligent believers, on this important subject, it is necessary that we should distinguish between the different senses in which sanctification is contemplated in the Scriptures. One reason for the perplexity, we venture to think, is found in the fact that different aspects of the same truth are often confused. We should clearly recognize the distinction, for instance, between three things: **sanctification as a process**, as **an act or attitude of consecration**, and **as a gift**. Let us consider that first which is the best understood, and not because it is the first in the order of time.

1. **Sanctification may be considered as a PROCESS**; that is, as a work wrought in the soul of the believer by the Holy Spirit, subsequently to regeneration. Of both regeneration and renewal the Holy Spirit is the Author, but the two things are not the same. Regeneration is an instantaneous communication of divine life to the soul. It is not capable of degrees; no believer is more or less regenerate than another. **“But this work of sanctification is progressive, and admits of degrees.** One may be more sanctified and more holy than another, even though he is truly sanctified and truly holy. **It is begun** at once, and **carried on gradually.**” (Owen on the work of the Holy Spirit).

We do not intend, however, to inquire how the Holy Spirit carries on His work, our present purpose being to ascertain from Scripture what are the chief features of that work.

We learn, for instance, that it is **gradual and progressive**, from such passages as 2 Corinthians 3:18. Our spiritual transformation is there described as still going on. “We are

changed (or being changed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The change here described is that gradual conformity to Christ which takes place during this present life. This is something more than a mere reformation of character, and is brought about by something higher than mere moral culture or discipline; it is transfiguration.

Sanctification considered from this point of view is thus seen to be a *process*. Such also is the nature of all **spiritual progress and growth**—a progressive and gradual development of the new creation within the believer.

Now it is evident that in that sense our sanctification can never in this life reach a point beyond which there is to be no further progress. It can never, therefore, be said to be complete. So long as there is room for a fuller manifestation of the divine image, the work cannot be said to be completed.

2. But sanctification may be looked at from another point of view—as an ATTITUDE. It may be regarded in relation to our own individual condition and conduct—as personal separation from all known sin on the one hand, and dedication to God on the other. The root-thought of sanctity is separateness. A man sanctifies himself when he separates himself from that which is evil and impure. “I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44). So again in the New Testament we have the exhortation addressed to those who were already set apart unto God: “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In this aspect sanctification may be regarded as a personal and definite act of consecration to God. Following the initial act, the habit or attitude of surrender is formed; and as progress is made, so the thoroughness of dedication to God deepens and increases.

We may take the word “yield” as expressive of the main idea involved in such a personal consecration; it puts before us what we may call the human side of the doctrine of holiness.

In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle beseeches those who were already Christians “to present their bodies a living sacrifice.” What did the apostle mean? To “present” is to “yield.” The same word occurs in chapter 6, verses 13, 16 and 19. Now what is it to yield? It is to cease to resist. That there may be a resistance to the will of God even in those who have been quickened by the Spirit, no believer who knows any thing of his own heart can deny. This resistance is one of the main hindrances to the exercise of faith. It was so with Jacob at Peniel. “And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” Who was this that confronted Jacob, and whom Jacob resisted? It was none other than the Angel of the Covenant: it was the Lord Himself who laid His hand on Jacob.

Though God had not forsaken Jacob, Jacob had been following in the main his own will during his sojourn in Padan-aram. Twenty years before he had been favored with a wonderful vision, in which God had revealed to him the way of access in prayer and the way of blessing from God to man; he had seen God in covenant with His people. If Jacob apprehended there at Bethel nothing more, he beheld at least God as his Protector and Provider and Guide. And this

vision drew from him a vow: “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God” (Genesis 28:20-21). But how had it been with him during those twenty years? He had sojourned with Laban, and there he had pursued the same course that he had previously followed with his brother and his father—a course of meanness and deception. God had sent him trials and had during those years been contending with him, bringing back to his memory and his conscience the evil of his own ways; but Jacob was still the same Jacob—the supplanter—not humbled, not broken, full of carnal policy and self-seeking.

But now comes the crisis. Jacob’s will must be broken. In this conflict Jacob’s *wrestling* must not be confounded with Jacob’s *clinging*. So long as he wrestled—that is, resisted—the conflict lasted. But at last the resistance ceased.

“And when He (the Lord) saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him” (Genesis 32:25). All power to resist was now at an end.

This passage in Jacob’s history has a parallel in the life of many a child of God. How many can trace a similar crisis in God’s dealing with them!

The power of resistance—which is self-will—being broken, the strength to cling—which is faith—is now brought into exercise. So we see Jacob, the moment his thigh was out of joint, no longer wrestling but clinging—no longer as an antagonist resisting an enemy, but as a suppliant in an attitude of earnest entreaty: “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.”

This was the power by which Jacob prevailed; and it is to this act of clinging, as the symbol of faith, that the prophet Hosea refers: “By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him” (Hosea 12:3-4).

Thus we learn that if we would cling with a victorious faith we must first yield in a spirit of entire submission. You cannot cling until you have ceased to resist.

But yielding means also ceasing to withhold. “My son, give Me thine heart.” In other words, let God have full possession, not only of the spirit and the soul, but of all your physical powers. Yield every member up to Him.

And again, yielding also means ceasing to struggle. No longer trying to keep oneself up—putting forth vigorous efforts to keep oneself from sinking—but casting all upon Him who is able to keep us from falling.

Looking at this aspect of our subject, then, we may note two things of paramount importance. The first is the condition of the will: the second is the attitude of our faith. To be wholly the Lord’s—to let go one’s will so that henceforth Christ is to lead me and plan for me, and have His way with me in everything—is to be ready to be separated from many ways and things to which naturally we cling very tenaciously. It is to let Him have the whole heart, to reign there supreme. The will is not really yielded if we have any reserves. We have not let go our moorings if there is still but one rope that keeps our little boat to the shore. We may have “slipped” many a cable

that has kept us to the land, but if one single rope remains we are still held fast. We are not yet wholly the Lord's in the sense of practical consecration. (Romans 12:1) looks upon the man within as the priest who lays upon the altar not the body of a dead sheep, but his own living body. . . . Our body has now the sacredness associated in the mind of a Jew with the animals laid on the brazen altar; . . . and presentation to God makes our body *holy*, as it did the sacrificial animals (Exodus 29:37). Henceforth they exist only to work out God's purposes" (Beet).

3. Lastly, sanctification in its fullest sense is a GIFT. Nothing is more essential in order to dwell in God's presence than holiness. Forgiveness of sins is not all we need. Peace alone is not sufficient. Nor is a perfect righteousness which places us in a position of acceptance with God all that is provided for us in the gospel. **There must be likeness to God . . . conformity of heart . . . oneness of nature.**

Now we know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14); and yet we believe that Christ is able to save the sinner even at the very last moment of his earthly existence. Taking holiness only in the one sense of a process or work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost suggests a difficulty. It may reasonably be asked, if without holiness no man can see the Lord, what becomes of those who, like the penitent thief, come to Christ at the eleventh hour? They have no time or opportunity for the growth and development of sanctification.

But the difficulty leads one to inquire. What does the Scripture mean by holiness? That it often refers to the process which is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit all must admit, but that Christ Himself is made of God unto us sanctification as well as righteousness, many of God's children fail to understand. One of God's greatest gifts—bound up in His "unspeakable Gift"—is that of holiness.

But what is holiness? How does God teach us what holiness means? Does He give us an abstract definition—a mere verbal description? No, He sends us His Son. He sets before us a Person, a living embodiment, His own ideal of holiness.

Jesus is God's conception of a perfect man. In His life on earth we have set before us God's ideal of divine holiness manifested and unfolded in a real human nature.

God sent His Son not only to be the "Just One," who should fulfill all righteousness and meet all the claims of His righteous law, He sent Him to be the "Holy One," who should satisfy all the desires of a Father's heart—as the One in whom He could ever delight. He was therefore made wisdom to us from God, even righteousness and sanctification.

But how did Christ become sanctification unto us? He Himself declares, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19); or, to make sanctification possible, He sanctifies Himself. Christ here puts before us **the progressive aspect of His own sanctification.** Already He was sanctified by the Father. "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified," etc. (John 10:36). But He speaks now of His own personal consecration to the will of His Father, which should secure the sanctification of His believing ones.

What He would subsequently unfold and develop in those who should be brought into living union with Himself He first realizes in Himself. **Their holiness should be essentially the same as that which was being accomplished in His own person.**

It is important here to bear in mind that “to *sanctify* is not synonymous with to *purify*. To purify oneself implies that one is defiled; to sanctify oneself is simply to consecrate to God the natural powers of the soul and of the body, as soon as they come into exercise.”

And so we read, “He *learned obedience* by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). This denotes not a transition from disobedience to obedience, but the development in His own person and experience of the principle of entire consecration to God in connection with the trials and sufferings of a real human life, which has constituted Him the Captain of our salvation. “Being *perfected* He *became* the author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9). The “perfecting” of Jesus as the “Leader of salvation” was historically accomplished in His person, and in this manner: by His having actually passed through and completed His career of human trial and suffering.

Christ then, who is the Pattern and Example, has also become the “Author of eternal salvation,” not merely as the external source but as the indwelling Life—**the vital Cause of our personal transformation.** And this He becomes to all “those *obeying* Him.” Having reached the goal Himself, He becomes the cause or origin of their sanctification.

From this we learn that to become holy we must possess the “Holy One.” It must be Christ in us. Without *that* holiness “no man shall see the Lord.” Holiness of walk flows from the Holy One. Conformity to the will of God in conduct is the outcome of conformity to the will of God in heart and mind, and this can only be brought about by enshrining Christ as Lord in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15). That is, “Render to Christ in the inmost chamber of your being the reverence which belongs to Him who claims to be your Proprietor and Master” (Beet). Possess the source and you have the stream. This is that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.”

But although this Gift is a present possession in the case of every believer, how many there are that fail to apprehend what it is they really do possess in Christ! It is one thing to be the owner of an estate; it is another thing to know what it contains. It is one thing to be in actual possession of the property, another thing to know the vast treasures of wealth that lie beneath the surface. So we may have received Christ Jesus the Lord into our hearts and yet may still have seen but little comparatively of the riches of grace and of glory stored up in Him for our daily realization.

And therefore, though Christ is ours—we have Him as a present possession—we must still follow on to know Him more perfectly. He must be ever the object of our daily aspirations. “Follow . . . that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” This implies activity, earnestness, diligence, zeal. To follow after an object is to have it constantly before you; you do not lose sight of it. It dwells in your thoughts; it becomes a part of your very life; it enters into

your practice; it stamps your character. That which is the object of your desire and the aim of your energies will have a transforming influence on your life.

But this is a very different thing from saying that our likeness to Christ is just the result of a mere imitation of Jesus Christ. Christ is our sanctification in a far higher sense than that in which He is our pattern. He is our holiness because He Himself dwells in us, to control our whole moral being, to transfigure our whole lives, and to become in us the spring of all our thoughts and words and deeds.

‘The Son of God, who loved me,’ and ‘Christ liveth in me.’ A man could not live in another man. A man can leave us his memory, his example, his teaching; but he cannot live again in us. If Jesus is only a holy man, complete and normal Christian sanctification is necessarily reduced to the sincere effort to follow and emulate him; and the Church would be nothing more than an association of well-disposed people, united together for the purpose of doing good, while studying their pattern, Jesus Christ. This is the level to which the most elevated and the most glorious idea of the gospel will immediately descend when once the crown of deity has been snatched from the head of Christ.

But, as Scripture and experience both teach us, true Christian holiness is something more than effort, an aspiration of man: it is a communication of God to man; it is Christ in person who comes and dwells in us by the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul calls Christ not only our righteousness, but also our sanctification.

1. **Ephesians 1:3** Blessed us with every spiritual blessing **in Christ**.

First Man

2. **Romans 5:12** Through **one** man . . . sin entered . . . **all** died
3. **Romans 5:18** **One** man’s offense . . . judgment came to **all** . . . condemnation
4. **Romans 5:19** **By one** man’s offense . . . many were **made sinners**

Second Man

5. **Acts 13:38** Through **this man** . . . **by Him** every one who believes . . . justified from **all** things

6. **Acts 13:41** Behold . . . I work a work in your day . . . work you will by no means believe
7. **Ephesians 2:10** **We** are His workmanship . . . created **in Christ**
8. **Romans 6:5** **We have been** united together in the likeness of **His death** certainly we shall also be in the likeness of **His** resurrection
9. **1 Corinthians 1:30** Of **Him** . . . you are **in** Christ . . . made unto you righteousness . . . redemption . . . sanctification
10. **Philippians 1:11** Fruits of righteousness . . . by Jesus Christ
11. **Romans 6:22** You have your fruit to holiness (sanctification)
12. **John 15:4** As a branch cannot bear fruit of its self . . . unless **abide in me**
13. **1 John 4:13** We know we abide in Him . . . **because** He gave us His Spirit
14. **Ephesians 3:16-17** Be strengthened with might . . . inner man . . . through His Spirit that Christ may dwell . . . your hearts
15. **2 Corinthians 3:18** Beholding . . . are being