

**OCCASIONAL PAPERS  
ON SCRIPTURAL  
SUBJECTS; NO. IV**

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Occasional papers on scriptural subjects; No. IV by Benjamin Wills Newton

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**BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON**

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## Thoughts on Practical Sanctification.

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NATURALLY, (as has been elsewhere observed) we are criminals in relation to the Courts of God's judgment, and unclean in relation to the Courts of His worship—having, therefore, no title to approach God in peace, much less to serve Him as the priests of His sanctuary: yet the moment we are brought through faith (even though that faith be feeble) into connexion with the one Sacrifice, we are both "justified" and "sanctified," (Rom. v. and Heb. x.)—and that for ever. "Sanctified," says the Apostle, "by the offering of the body of Jesus once:" and again: "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are [so] sanctified." By our Substitute's meritorious suffering and obedience in life and in death—means which the wisdom and love of God appointed, God's governmental righteousness has been vindicated, His wrath appeased, and every claim of His holiness *satisfied*. "We owe" (I quote from one of the Puritan writers) "we owe unto God a double debt; first, a debt of obedience; and if that fail, secondly, a debt of punishment. And both these hath Christ freed us from: first, by obeying the will of His Father in every thing; and secondly, by suffering whatsoever was due to us for our transgressions."\* Thus, the double claim of God's holy Law is for ever *satisfied*. Everlasting immunity from wrath and abiding reconciliation and peace with God are the necessary results of this satisfaction. Yet reconciliation and peace are not the only blessings conferred through Christ on the justified. In further attestation to the worthiness and excellency of that eternal Person who obeyed and suffered in the stead of His people, God hath been pleased to admit the justified into a love and favour like to the love and favour that He bears towards His Son. This is sufficiently taught in the memorable words: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved Me." Already that love and

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\* See Sibbes, "The Church's Riches," Vol. iv. p. 501. Also Archbishop Ussher, "Incarnation of the Son of God," (Works iv. p. 591 and 595).

favour rest upon us; already, as a consequence thereof, life is given unto us in Him risen; and soon we are to be changed into His heavenly likeness in glory, then to have powers communicated to us to know and to serve Him perfectly—all being the result of the imputation of the merits of Him by whose obedience we were “constituted righteous.”

The new Covenant of grace, therefore, and all the blessings that are given under it, are founded on the dignity and excellency of that Divine Person who “gave HIMSELF for us.” The excellency of the Person of “the Son” is the great central fact, whence all the characteristic blessings of the redeemed, like rays from the centre of light, emanate. Our salvation hath been accomplished by the vicarious obedience and vicarious suffering, in life and in death, of no less a Person than Immanuel. It is He who hath glorified for us God’s holy Law by keeping it fully, and by bearing its curse. It is Immanuel who, by the one oblation of Himself once offered, did on the Cross present unto God a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of all His believing people. On this finished oblation rests our *justification* as described in the fifth of Romans, as well as our *sanctification* as described in the tenth of Hebrews. Both are alike finished and complete; for the work on which they are founded is complete. Our title to draw nigh in peace into the Holiest of all rests now, and will rest for ever, on the righteousness of Another that has been once and for ever sacrificially presented for us. Our title to stand in God’s holy presence in everlasting peace is as complete now, whilst we are *not* personally perfect, as it will be in glory, when we *shall* be personally perfect: for that title rests, in time and in eternity, on the same basis—the sacrificial work of our Substitute finished on the Cross. It rests on something altogether external to ourselves—something that is to be viewed altogether apart from any of the results that may be, by God’s sovereign grace, wrought, either in us, or upon us, whether at the time when we first believe, or afterwards. The sanctification spoken of in the verse, “sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once,” is a sanctification that admits neither of increase nor of diminution. Like justification, it is as complete at the first moment of our Christian course as when that course ends in glory. It depends not on any *continuous* work or service even of Christ. It depends solely on the work which He finished once and for ever on the Cross. Our *title* to approach God in peace, whether in the Courts of His judgment or in His Sanctuary,



rests, and will for ever rest, not on any change wrought *on* us; not on any righteousness, or holiness, or obedience wrought *in* us, or *by* us; but, solely and altogether, on a righteousness wrought out for us by Immanuel in the days of His flesh. His meritorious obedience for us in life and in death (for He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross), forms that righteousness, by the imputation of which we are "constituted righteous" before God. And seeing that they, who have this righteousness imputed unto them, are counted precious according to the preciousness of the righteousness that is imputed to them; and seeing that the preciousness of that righteousness is measured by the infinite value of that eternal Person, whose righteousness it is; it follows, that they, to whom it is imputed, are not only justified, but stand under the value of all the merits of Immanuel for ever and ever. And thus, whilst Imputation is the sole ground of their justification, it is also the sole ground of their subsequent blessing. The redeemed in glory will trace all the blessings, all the joys, all the glories, every gift that God's love and goodness bestows upon them in the ages of eternity, entirely and solely to the imputation of the merits of the Lord their Redeemer; whose merits being infinite, the blessedness is also infinite.

One of the great gifts of God to them whom He is pleased thus to justify is *life*—life suited to His own presence in glory. It is not such life as Adam had when first created, happy and innocent, in Paradise; for that life, though perfect in its kind, and suited to the condition of one who was "of the earth, earthy," was not suited for that glory which "flesh and blood cannot inherit." Therefore, in Christ, who from everlasting was, and unto everlasting shall be, "the living One," (*ὁ ζῶν* Rev. i.) God hath given to the redeemed, new and heavenly life. At present, this life, as to its fulness, is "hidden with Christ in God," to be communicated to us in all completeness when He returns. In the meanwhile, it is imparted to us measurably here; and therefore, we read of "the new man created according to God in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24): and again, "the new man which is renewed for knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). These words evidently teach, that that which is thus imparted to, and "created in" us, is something entirely *new*; as different from all that pertains to us naturally, as the last Adam, who is heavenly, is different from the first Adam who was earthy. Whilst therefore, the justification and sanctification that come in virtue of the one finished offering on the Cross secure to

believers an abiding *title* to draw nigh in peace, even into the Holiest of all; so the creation of "the new man" in them and the superadded and concomitant gift of the Holy Ghost as the Paraclete, to dwell in them, supplies us with an *ability* equally abiding, to draw nigh and to worship and to serve. And thus that other promise of the new Covenant—"I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts," is fulfilled: for wherever "the new man" is, there the laws of God are on the heart written; and "the new man" is wherever faith in Jesus is.

By the creation then of "the new man," and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, there is implanted in all believers an abiding power of practical sanctification. They *may* indeed greatly repress and hinder that power. They *may* grieve that Holy Spirit "whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption." Yet still, seeing that it is a power bestowed, because of Christ, under "the everlasting covenant" of grace, it is a gift that is never withdrawn, even from the most unworthy of the family of faith. The development may be greatly hindered, yet the power remains. Nevertheless, though development may be obstructed, it never can, in the case of any true believer, be altogether wanting. There are certain developments that must, more or less markedly, be found in all believers. One of the especial objects of the Epistle of John, is to mark these *necessary* characteristics, in order that they, in whom such characteristics are altogether wanting, might not be recognised (whatever their profession) as really belonging to the fold of Christ. By nature, we are essentially and habitually "doers of evil;" "lovers of the world;" "walkers in darkness;" but when brought to God by means of the gospel of His grace, we become habitually and essentially "doers of good;" "lovers of God;" "walkers in the light:" evidence of this, more or less distinct, being found in our practical ways. Once, we walked in the world's path, and followed it with full purpose of heart: now, we have entered another way—the *narrow* way, and to that way we belong, even though we may stumble in it or walk with halting step. Two practical evidences especially noted in the Scripture as belonging to all true saints, are, first, the having love towards all the family of faith *as such*; secondly, readiness to forgive the trespasses of others *if there be repentance and confession*. They who love not the brotherhood of faith, or who refuse to forgive the trespasses of others, when repented of and acknowledged, do not, we are told, "know God," and are not to be numbered amongst the forgiven. And although, whilst we

remain in fallen flesh, we are not delivered from the strugglings of indwelling sin, and are therefore unable to keep with perfectness that holy Law in which, according to "the new man," we delight; we are, nevertheless, enabled so far to resist the law of sin in our members as to prevent its bringing forth its fruits unto death: nay more, we are enabled to render fruit unto God, imperfect indeed, but real—"acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ." Every branch in the true Vine that is altogether fruitless, will not be recognised by the Father as rightfully belonging to the Vine. Such a branch is the symbol of a mere professor. It will finally be "taken away."

Yet, even living branches differ greatly both in the quantity and character of the fruit they bear. It may be scanty and ill-ripened; or more abundant and mature. Fruit has not always its proper beauty and bloom. As in natural, so in spiritual life, there are many things that may hinder development, even where the power of development is. In a new-born babe, there may be the elements of great physical and intellectual strength; but time, nurture, and care, are needed to secure the due development. When first created anew in Christ Jesus, we are neither "fathers," nor "young men" in Him. We are "little children"—babes needing "the unadulterated milk of the Word, that we might grow thereby." Progress is the law of our new condition. That which is justly expected of us is, that we should "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our God and Saviour"—that we should "grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ." Growth, increase, advance, are always spoken of in the Scriptures as the right, though not the inseparable characteristics of a Christian condition. The Corinthians and the Hebrews ought not to have halted, or rather retrograded as they did. Yet their retrogression did not take from them that saintship which was given to them, and preserved for them, in and through *Christ*. They were truly sanctified by faith in Jesus, even though their growth and progress in the ways of Christ were stayed. Yet they *ought* to have answered to the desire of God concerning them: they *ought* to have grown. If it had not been the desire of God that all His redeemed people should attain a condition of ripeness and maturity here, (and maturity implies growth) we should not have found the Thessalonians addressed in such words as these: "Now the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming