

THE VISION, PRACTICE, AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

Message One

God's Purpose for the Church

(1)

To Have the Divine Sonship in Full through Sanctification for the Corporate Expression of God

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:3-6; Heb. 2:10-11; 1 Thes. 5:23

- I. There are three main items of God's purpose for the church:**
- A. The church must have the full sonship—Eph. 1:4-5.
 - B. Through the church God's multifarious wisdom is made known to the enemy; the church thus becomes God's poem, His wise exhibition of all that Christ is—3:10; 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:30.
 - C. God's purpose is to head up all things in Christ through the church—Eph. 1:10, 19-23.
- II. The eternal purpose of God in His intention according to His heart's desire is to have many sons; God desires to have many sons to be His expression in a corporate way—vv. 3-6; 3:11; Rom. 8:28-29; John 1:12-13; Rev. 21:7:**
- A. Romans 8:19 tells us that the whole creation is waiting for the revelation and the glorification of the sons of God, and Hebrews 2:10 says that Christ is leading many sons into glory; Christ is doing one thing today: He is bringing us into glory—2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16-18.
 - B. At present the creation is enslaved under the law of decay and corruption; its only hope is to be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God when the sons of God are revealed, manifested—Rom. 8:17-21.
- III. The choosing of God's people for them to be holy is for the purpose of their being made sons of God, participating in the divine sonship; in eternity past God the Father "chose us...to be holy...unto sonship"—Eph. 1:4-5:**
- A. *Holy* means not only sanctified, separated unto God, but also different, distinct, from everything that is common; only God is different, distinct, from all things; hence, He is holy, and holiness is His nature:
 - 1. God chose us that we should be holy; He makes us holy by imparting Himself, the Holy One, into our being, that our whole being may be permeated and saturated with His holy nature.
 - 2. For us, God's chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) and to have our whole being permeated with God Himself.
 - B. The divine sonship is accomplished by our being mingled with God (the Holy One as the Holy Spirit) unto full sanctification—Eph. 4:30; 1 Pet. 1:15-16:

1. God is working Himself into us and mingling Himself with us so that we may be holy, absolutely sanctified by Him, in Him, and with Him; every bit of our human nature will be mingled with the divine nature—cf. Lev. 2:4-5.
2. In the Old Testament type, every part of the boards of the tabernacle was overlaid with gold; in the fulfillment of the type, God mingles Himself with the church so that we may be brought into the full sonship—Exo. 26:28-30.
3. According to the teaching of the New Testament, sonship means:
 - a. That we are born of God to have God as our life and nature—John 1:12-13; 3:6; 1 John 5:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:4.
 - b. That we grow up with God and are in God, growing up into Christ, the Head, in all things and growing with the growth of God—Eph. 1:6, 10; 4:15-16; Col. 2:19.
 - c. That we are absolutely mingled with God; every part of our being will be permeated, saturated, and overlaid with God—Lev. 2:4-5; 1 Thes. 5:23.
 - d. That we are qualified to inherit all that God is, all that God has, and all that God has purposed—Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:17.
 - e. That we eventually are absolutely holy and divine—Eph. 1:4; Rev. 21:2, 10.
- C. God's chosen ones are made His sons by His sanctifying Spirit (Rom. 15:16; Gal. 4:6); this is why Ephesians 1:3 calls this a spiritual blessing, a blessing by the Spirit:
 1. Sanctification for sonship is still going on; day by day, however, we may not live in our sonship because we may not care for the sanctifying Spirit speaking and working in our spirit—Rom. 15:16; 8:4; Eph. 5:26.
 2. Today we must learn to live by the Spirit, to serve by the Spirit, to act according to the Spirit, and to have our being altogether by the Spirit, with the Spirit, and according to the Spirit all day long—Rom. 1:1, 9; 8:4; Phil. 3:3; Zech. 4:6.
 3. Then we need to grow in the life of Christ with the proper nourishment in the Spirit; we can be nourished in three ways: by reading the holy Word, by listening to the spiritual speaking, and by coming to the meetings—John 8:31-32; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 2:7; Psa. 73:16-17, 22-26; 77:13.
- D. God's chosen ones become holy and without blemish before Him and are predestinated unto sonship "in love"—Eph. 1:4; cf. 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2; 6:24; Rev. 2:4:
 1. Love in Ephesians 1:4 refers to the love with which God loves His chosen ones and His chosen ones love Him; it is in this love, in such a love, that God's chosen ones become holy and without blemish before Him.
 2. First, God loved us; then this divine love inspires us to love Him in return; in such a condition and atmosphere of love, we are saturated with God to be holy and without blemish, just as He is—1 John 4:19; Psa. 31:23a; 116:1; Mark 12:30.

IV. Christ as the Captain of salvation leads God's many sons into glory, the corporate expression of God, by saving them organically through sanctification; sanctification is God's "sonizing"—Heb. 2:10-11; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Thes. 5:23; Rom. 5:10:

- A. Hebrews 2:10 says that the Lord as the Captain of God's salvation will lead

many sons into glory; then verse 11 speaks of the One who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified; this shows that sanctification is for sonship.

- B. This brings us into a fuller understanding of Ephesians 1:4-5; verse 4 says, “To be holy,” and verse 5 says, “Unto sonship”; *to be holy...unto sonship* shows us again that sanctification is for sonship.
- C. The divine sanctification for the divine sonship is the center of the divine economy and the central thought of the revelation in the New Testament; sanctification is the hinge of God’s carrying out His eternal economy.
- D. The divine sanctification is the holding line in the carrying out of the divine economy to “sonize” us divinely, making us sons of God that we may become the same as God in His life and in His nature (but not in His Godhead), so that we may be God’s expression; we say that sanctification is the holding line because every step of God’s economy in His work with us is to make us holy:
 - 1. The seeking sanctification, the initial sanctification, is unto repentance to bring us back to God; our repentance and believing were due to the seeking Spirit, the convicting Spirit—1 Pet. 1:2; Luke 15:8-10, 17-21; John 16:8-11.
 - 2. The redeeming sanctification, the positional sanctification, is by the blood of Christ to transfer us from Adam to Christ—Heb. 13:12.
 - 3. The regenerating sanctification, the beginning of dispositional sanctification, renews us from our spirit to make us, the sinners, sons of God to form an organism for God’s corporate expression, which is the organic Body of Christ, the church—2 Cor. 5:17; John 1:12-13; 3:5-6, 8; 1 Pet. 1:3; Titus 3:5.
 - 4. The renewing sanctification, the continuation of dispositional sanctification, renews our soul from our mind through all the parts of our soul to make our soul a part of God’s new creation—Rom. 12:2b; Eph. 4:23; 2 Cor. 4:16; Gal. 6:15.
 - 5. The transforming sanctification, the daily sanctification, reconstitutes us with the element of Christ metabolically to make us a new constitution as a part of the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Rom. 12:1-2; Psa. 68:19.
 - 6. The conforming sanctification, the shaping sanctification, shapes us in the image of the glorious Christ to make us the expression of Christ—Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:10.
 - 7. The glorifying sanctification, the consummating sanctification, redeems our body by transfiguring it to make us Christ’s expression in full and in glory so that we may be fully and wholly sanctified in our spirit, soul, and body to be a consummated incorporation of God’s many sons who are matured in the processed Triune God as their life that they may express God as the New Jerusalem for eternity—v. 21; Rom. 8:23; 1 Thes. 5:23; Rev. 21:2-3, 7, 9-11, 22.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE DIVINE SANCTIFICATION IS THE HOLDING LINE IN THE CARRYING OUT OF THE DIVINE ECONOMY

In this message we want to see that the divine sanctification is the holding line in the carrying out of the divine economy. It was not until the 1980s that I began to

use the word *economy* frequently. Formerly, we used the word *plan* as a replacement for *economy*. God's economy is His plan, but the word *plan* does not mean as much as the word *economy*. *Economy* is a word anglicized from the Greek word *oikonomia*.

God's economy is the intention of His heart's desire, and God made this intention a purpose. This purpose became and still is God's economy. Sanctification is a great point in God's economy. It is the holding line in the carrying out of the divine economy. We need to see what the term *holding line* means. When a person goes fishing, he needs a line. That is the holding line for his fishing. The line holds his fish. In other words, the line directs his fishing. We say that sanctification is the holding line because every step of God's economy in His work with us is to make us holy.

God created the universe. Not one part of it was holy. Then God created man. Even before man's fall, he was not holy. In the whole universe, only One is holy, that is, God Himself. Regardless of how perfect and good someone is, this does not make him holy. The angels are perfect and good, but strictly speaking, they are not holy as God is. In order to be holy, you must have the holy essence. If something is called steel, it must have the essence of steel. Thus, if you are holy, you must have the holy essence, and the holy essence in the whole universe is God Himself.

The New Jerusalem is called the holy city (Rev. 21:2). It is built with gold, pearl, and precious stones on the gold (vv. 18-21). The pearls are for the gates, and the precious stones are for the wall with its foundations. These are built upon gold. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3 that he laid Christ as the unique foundation and that now we must build upon this foundation. If we build with wood, grass, and stubble, we will suffer punishment. But if we build with gold, silver, and precious stones, we will be rewarded (vv. 11-15). Here Paul said that gold is a material.

Strictly speaking, however, gold is not the material *for* the building. Gold is the site of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is built on gold. When a person builds a house on a plot of land, the land is not the material *for* the building. The city proper of the New Jerusalem is gold. The street is gold. On this gold the gates are built. On this gold the foundations are laid and the wall is built. Gold signifies God in His divine nature. In the whole universe, only God is holy in nature.

Some may argue by saying that the angels are holy and that in the Old Testament there are God's holy people with the holy city. The temple was holy, and the gold was sanctified by the temple (Matt. 23:17). The priests were holy, the altar was holy, and the offerings were sanctified by the altar (v. 19). In this sense something that belongs to God can also be considered holy. Even the garments of the priests were made holy by being anointed. After being anointed they became holy because they became something for God and something belonging to God. But that is not the genuine holiness in nature. The tabernacle and the things related to it were not God Himself but were something belonging to God.

When we are speaking of sanctification in its highest sense in the New Testament, we are speaking about something not merely belonging to God but something which is God. Ephesians 1:4 and 5 speak of being holy unto sonship. We are chosen

to be holy so that we can become God's sons. Since we are God's sons, born of God, we are not just belonging to God. We are sons of God who have God's essence, God's life and nature.

The garments of the high priest belonged to God, but they did not have God's life and nature. Today, however, we are sons of God with the holy nature and the holy life of God Himself. We have the holy essence of God, so we are holy. But we were not created or born this way. We were created as common human beings, but we became fallen sinners, even God's enemies. But one day we were born of God, and this new birth revolutionized our essence.

Regeneration is a reconditioning. Regeneration reconditions us with something essential. This essential matter is God Himself. When He regenerated us, He was born into our being, so He became our essence, our nature and our life. Now we are holy, exactly as He is. He is gold, and we also are gold in nature. In this sense, only the ones who are born of God as His sons can be called holy people.

On the one hand, we are all holy, but our holiness is at various levels. One brother who has been in the church life for many years is more holy than a new one who has been recently regenerated. This new one's spirit is regenerated by God as the essence, but just a little part of his being is holy. His soul has not been touched much by the essence of God. But another brother may have the experience of being made holy for over forty years. His spirit has been sanctified, and his soul is greatly sanctified.

Our being made holy will be consummated at the redemption of our body, which is the transfiguration of our body. Thus, the sanctifying work of the Spirit first issues in our repentance and continues all the way to our glorification. In between our repentance and our glorification are regeneration, renewing, transformation, conformation, and the transfiguration of our body, which is the glorification of our entire being. This is the line of the divine sanctification to make us holy, so this line holds the carrying out of God's economy.

Today we all have been "hooked" by the line of the divine sanctification. We were in the "ocean" of humanity, but this line reached us, and we have been hooked. Our being hooked will be consummated when we are transfigured. Then the line will be completed. A number of us were studying in school when someone came and spoke something about Christ to us. There was a "hook" hidden in this one's speaking, and a hook got into us. We were convicted and we repented and believed. Then we were regenerated in order for us to continue on the holding line of the divine sanctification.

The divine sanctification holds all of our spiritual experiences from our repentance to our glorification. It goes through our regeneration, renewing, transformation, and conformation unto the redemption of our body (Eph. 1:14; 4:30). *Unto* means "resulting in." The redemption of our body is the consummation of the divine sanctification.

Such a sanctification is to "sonize" us divinely, making us sons of God that we may become the same as God in His life and in His nature (but not in His Godhead),

so that we can be God's expression. Hence, sanctification is the divine sonizing. We are sons to our parents humanly, but we have been sonized by regeneration divinely. We do not have and we cannot have God's Godhead, but we do have God's life and nature so that we may be God's expression. A son, in principle, is the expression of the father. God the Father sanctifies us to sonize us, to make us His sons for His expression. In regeneration we were sonized, but that sonizing is just a start, an initiation. After being regenerated we need to grow to reach maturity. We become mature when our soul is fully sonized. Eventually, our body, which is still full of weakness, sickness, lust, and sinfulness, will be transfigured, glorified in full.

THE STEPS OF THE DIVINE SANCTIFICATION

The Seeking Sanctification—the Initial Sanctification

God in eternity past made an economy, and in that economy He decided to have many sons. After He created man, man became fallen. Then God the Spirit came to sanctify man (1 Pet. 1:2). We were lost in Adam, in sin, and in death. We were in a heap of collapse, full of sin and death. But the Spirit came to seek us out, and He found us. Then He convicted us. Then He stirred up our spirit to repent. This was our initial sanctification unto repentance (Luke 15:8-10). This seeking sanctification resulted in our repentance to bring us back to God (vv. 17-21).

The Redeeming Sanctification— the Positional Sanctification

The redeeming sanctification, the positional sanctification, is by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13:12) to transfer us from Adam to Christ. This changed the place where we were. This is the positional sanctification, having nothing to do with our disposition.

The Regenerating Sanctification— the Beginning of the Dispositional Sanctification

Our regeneration is a kind of sanctification. Regeneration is the beginning of the dispositional sanctification to renew us from our spirit (2 Cor. 5:17). God renewed us from the very center of our being, which is our spirit. In God's salvation He first touches our spirit to regenerate it, that is, to renew it. This makes us, the sinners who were the enemies of God, sons of God (John 1:12-13).

The Renewing Sanctification— the Continuation of the Dispositional Sanctification

The renewing sanctification continues our dispositional sanctification by renewing our soul from our mind through all the parts of our soul (Rom. 12:2b; Eph. 4:23). Romans 12:2 says that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, and the mind is the leading part of our soul. Our soul has three parts: the mind, emotion, and will.

Ephesians 4:23 speaks of our being renewed in the spirit of our mind. This means our regenerated spirit has entered into our mind to make us renewed entirely in our soul. This makes our soul a part of God's new creation (Gal. 6:15). Our spirit

has become a part of God's new creation, but not our soul. Through the renewing, our soul will be made a part of God's new creation.

The Transforming Sanctification—the Daily Sanctification

Second Corinthians 4:16 says that day by day our outer man, our old man, is being consumed, and our inner man, our new man, is being renewed. We should be renewed not merely day by day but also hour by hour and even minute by minute, continuously. Our entire environment, including the people around us, is the best instrument used by God to renew us. He is transforming us inwardly and metabolically with the divine element all the time.

The transforming sanctification is the daily sanctification, which reconstitutes us with the element of Christ metabolically to make us a new constitution as a part of the organic Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12). This is a kind of reconstitution, to discharge the old and to add in the new replacement of the element of Christ. In order for us to be the living members of Christ, we need to be constituted with Christ's element to make us a new constitution for the building up of the Body of Christ.

The Conforming Sanctification—the Shaping Sanctification

The conforming sanctification is the shaping sanctification to shape us in the image of the glorious Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). A fruit tree has the shaping principle of life within it. When a peach tree bears fruit, the fruit is shaped in the particular form of a peach. The regulating law of the peach life shapes the peach. In every life there is a regulating law. When the sanctifying Spirit sanctifies us, there is a shaping element to shape us into the image of the glorious Christ. This shaping makes us the expression of Christ. This is why we can manifest Christ. We express Christ because we have been shaped by the sanctifying Spirit.

The Glorifying Sanctification—the Consummating Sanctification

The glorifying sanctification is the consummating sanctification, the completing sanctification to redeem our body by transfiguring it (Phil. 3:21). Our vile and fallen body will be redeemed from sickness, from weakness, from death, and from lust and sinfulness to make us Christ's expression in full and in glory (Rom. 8:23). At this point God's salvation and God's sanctification to carry out God's economy have reached the highest level. This is the revelation of the divine sanctification in seven steps.

The divine sanctification, from its beginning to its ending, is altogether the fine work of the consummated, compound, life-giving, and indwelling Spirit of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God. (*The Spirit with Our Spirit*, pp. 119-125)