

Sanctification pt. 2
The Upward Call of God
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Last week I started talking about the term sanctification. If you'll recall, sanctification is a reality that has to do with separation. More specifically, it has to do with separation by way of the cross. There is a verse in Ephesians chapter 5 that speaks of Christ sanctifying the church through the washing of the water of the word. And there are several other Scriptures in the New Testament that deal with this same reality. I read some of them to you last week. All of them have to do with a deep and permanent and personal separation. I want to continue looking at sanctification this morning.

Whenever you're talking about the work of the cross, there are always two realities to keep in mind. First of all, there is what I often call the objective work of the cross. In other words, there is God's view, God's understanding of what He has accomplished once and for all time through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. And then, NOT in addition to that, but as a result of that, there is the personal, subjective experience of what God HAS accomplished through the cross. And that subjective, personal experience works in you only and always according to the measure of Light that is shining in your soul.

In other words, God has accomplished something. He has finished something that is a fixed reality. It is unbending and unchanging. But only as that accomplishment is revealed in you, only as His great achievement – Christ crucified – is revealed in you by the Spirit of Truth do you and I have any inward experience or apprehension of it. The objective facts are established in God's eyes. The subjective experience works in us to the degree that we see with His eyes, know with His mind, walk in His Light. In a sentence, just like the Promised Land of old, what God has given must be possessed by faith. So we must always keep these things in mind.

And with that in mind we can approach the topic of sanctification. As we have said, sanctification has to do with a permanent separation. It has to do with a great division. And that division is first an accomplished, unbending reality in the mind of God. And then that division, that separation, becomes an unstoppable reality in our souls as we grow up in His mind. But again, first it is something that God has accomplished.

I have been reading a lot of T. Austin-Sparks lately. He's a fantastic teacher and he has a way with words. Listen to what He says about this great divide. "God says 'in the moment in which I turned my face from My Son on the cross, I closed forever the door to the Adam race. I abandoned the Adam race, so far as it ever had a chance of being accepted by Me or coming into My purpose'....all that God [now] has to say to the Adam race is: you must be born again"

This judgment or division, this great abandonment, was accomplished by the cross of Jesus Christ. When Christ said "it is finished", God drew a line and said "I have forever divided myself, separated myself, from that realm, that reality, that man. That is not to say that He does not affect or intervene in the natural creation. I don't mean that He never gives direction in a decision or heals an ailing body. But He has terminated His *relationship* with that realm and that man. He has judged it, and put it out of His camp. He has raised up a boundary that forever divides between the first and the second, the old and the new, the living and the dead, the Light and the dark, Adam and Christ.

And we are by nature a part of what God has abandoned. We are by nature a partaker of what God has condemned. For this reason, Christ says "*The one believing into Him is not condemned; but the one not believing has already been condemned, (Joh 3:18).* John the Baptist echoes this same truth, saying, "*The one believing into the Son has everlasting life; but the one disobeying the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (Joh 3:36)* Paul says, "we are by nature children of wrath".

We have discussed these things before, and I trust we have also seen these things before. But I doubt that we usually stand still and look at this boundary, this line of demarcation, long enough for the magnitude of it to hit us with full force. In other words, I don't think we can bear to look very long at just how severe a thing it is. I don't think we normally want to see the full extent of what God has abandoned. Because to see it would demand a response that we're not ready to make.

When we're talking about sanctification, we are first of all talking about the full extent of what God has divided from Himself. That's where our understanding of sanctification begins. It continues with our experience of that division. But it begins with a Spirit-given recognition of how God has divided one universe from another. The universe of Adam and the universe of Christ. And there is a biblical term for each of these universes that I want to look at today. The one is called "above" and the other is called "below".

As you know, your Bible uses these two words somewhat frequently. Jesus says things like "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.". Or "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all." In Galatians 4, Paul says "but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." In Colossians chapter 3, he says "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above." James, in chapter 3, says "This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic."

Unfortunately, our natural minds are usually quick to 'carnalize' these terms. I mean, we hear the word above and below and we immediately think of geographic, physical locations. But the terms above and below aren't referring to physical locations, but rather to two opposite and contrary natures, lives, realms, orders. Rabon Byrd says, "above is not just where He is or where He takes us, but WHO He is...If above denotes the very nature of Christ, then beneath speaks of the nature of man. What I want us to see is that above there is Christ and nothing else; Christ all and in all: but beneath it is man and nothing else".

These are terms that relate **to a nature and order of reality**. Below, that nature is adamic, and the order is the system of *natural* reality. The adamic man is governed

in all things by the law of sin and death. This is the nature of the fallen adamic man. And the order below is governed by created laws and systems and structures that are for the natural man. This is 'below'. Below is not a place. It is a state of being, a kind of being, a kind of reality that is summed up in the word "Adam".

Above, however, is the nature and order of God in Christ. Perhaps you are not accustomed to thinking of Christ in this way, but Jesus Christ is more than just an individual being. Of course He is the individual and only Son of God. Of course He is the Person who came as a man, was crucified, buried, and raised. But He is also the life and realm and nature into which we come to live. As such, He is a universe of Truth and thought and reality and order and love and law that fulfills every type and shadow and becomes the reality of every promise and blessing having to do with our promised land. He is the land into which we come to dwell, the land which is above, the city which is above, the heavenly habitation.

In the incarnation, Jesus descended. He came down below. But that doesn't mean that He traveled any distance. That doesn't mean that he made a trip from one place to another. No, he descended when He took on the form of man. The journey was not from one location to another, it was from one kind to another. He descended when He became human. And He came to the world below, not just because He wanted to forgive sins. No it's much bigger than that. Sins are dealt with through the cross, but the cross is so much bigger than a way to deal with sins.

He descended below so that He could bear in Himself the end of that man. Not a physical end. But a judicial end. Paul says, He became the "last Adam". He took that entire tree, that entire kind, and brought it into a judicial and eternal separation from God. It is this separation that I'm trying to get you to see. That is why He cried out "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He brought the realm below into judgment, separation. And in the resurrection He did not then restore the earth or the adamic man to presence of God. The resurrection is not the return of Adam. It is not the redemption of the first man.

Christ alone was raised. And this raising from the dead is much more than we often assume. When the Scriptures talk about Christ risen from the dead, they do not simply refer to Christ getting His life back, or coming back alive. Christ's resurrection and ascension are where He left the world below and returned above. But He returned above having established an eternal boundary with only one blood-covered door.

In the cross of Jesus Christ, God dealt with the natural man in natural Israel under a natural covenant. He had put up with their disobedience, unbelief, and rebellion since the day He called them out of Egypt. He had put up with them for a very long time, and now, in total justice, He put them away.

Rom 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*

Having tolerated the rebellion and corruption of the first man, God put that man away and separated unto Himself a new man. Christ the firstfruits from among the dead. Christ the head of a new corporate body. Christ the firstborn of a new seed, a new kind. Now, Christ was raised up out from the earth. He ascended. He sanctified Himself that we could be sanctified in Him. He left the nature and order that is called "beneath", He left the realm that he had called "below". He rose up to where He was before. He drew a line, a permanent boundary that marked out the boundaries of a new Israel, a new Jerusalem. He drew a line that marked out the boundaries of God's relationship with man. The boundaries are the boundaries of Christ. The height the depth the width and the breadth of Christ. This is the heavenly land where we can dwell. This is the place and person and nature and order into which we are invited. Christ all and in all.

When He ascended, though He forever divided the first from the second, below from above, He left a door open. He left a door with blood on it for any who wanted to ascend with Him. The door was guarded by a cross. The door was guarded by a Cherubim with a flaming sword. You cannot pass through it and live. **And yet those who die His death are free to ascend. Those who will bear in themselves the death of Christ are called upward to a heavenly life, a heavenly place, a heavenly nature...all of which is Christ.**

*Joh 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Phillip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **hereafter you shall see heaven open**, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

In the book of Revelation, John the Apostle writes:

*Rev 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, **a door standing open in heaven**. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.*

I'm trying to impress on you the reality of what it means to be sanctified, to be set apart unto Christ. It is not simply a matter of devotion. It's not discipline or effort or zeal. It has to do with another Life to live, another place to be, another order to govern, another nature to learn. And all of these are Christ. Christ the Life, the Place, the Order, the Nature. It is the universe of Christ, high above the earth below. It is the mountain of God's inheritance, the Land of His choosing, the City of the great king. It is Christ risen, ascended, sanctified, and set apart. **And from Heaven He beckons us to arise. From heaven He calls us with the upward call of God. From heaven He declares us citizens with Himself, co-heirs, and He desires that we possess this Land by faith.**

And He would say to us today – "Lift up your eyes, church, from the place where you now are. You have been made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ in the heavens. Now lift up your eyes. Allow the Spirit of God to open the eyes of your

understanding, shine the Light of Life in your soul. Look to the north, the south, the east and the west, see this great land, this unsearchable inheritance that is called Christ. Lift up your eyes, because as far as you can see I have given to you."

Remember again, the experience of Abraham that God used to paint for us this same picture, this exact same story. We read it last week. Let me read part of it again.

Gen 13:14 *And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your seed forever... 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." 18 Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.*

I'm attempting to show something of the fixed divide between what is called below and above, but I'm also trying to set the stage for us to see something of the greatness of what the Scriptures call the "upward call of God in Christ." Or sometimes it is referred to as the "high calling."

What is your calling? Christians talk about their "calling" all the time. Unfortunately, we most often use this word to refer to a personal, individual roles in the earth or in the church. And, although roles and functions in both are valid, they do not constitute a person's calling. In other words, **Paul was called an Apostle by the Lord, but Paul would have never considered apostleship his calling.** Paul's specific function in the Lord's body had a name. That name was called Apostle, and he functioned in that role. But if you were to ask Paul about his calling, he would have said,

Phi 3:12 *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the **upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

And then he adds this... **Phi 3:15** *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.*

What is the meaning of phrase – "upward call of God in Christ Jesus"? Precisely what we've been talking about. **It is the beckoning of the Lord to our soul to abide in the heavens in Him. It is a perpetual invitation from the one who has ascended for us to ascend with Him, to be found in Him, to dwell (in our comprehension, in our awareness) where He dwells, to be with Him where He is.** Certainly we have already been translated into Him as a matter of spiritual fact, as a matter of God's view. Paul tells us that we have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and made to dwell in the Son of His love. **But our upward call is a trumpet call to the soul, a deep summoning of the soul, to make an experiential exodus out of the earth in order to be a purely heavenly being.**

I know to the carnal mind this sounds intense, even excessive. But is it anything different than the words of Paul who said "may it be that I would never boast except

in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world has been crucified to me and I have been crucified to the world.”? Was this merely a theological standing in Paul’s mind? Was it a positional truth that awaited actual consummation? Or was this the literal experience of that man’s soul. Did Paul perhaps actually experience this kind of sanctification, setting apart, separation from the nature and order that Christ called “below”?

I am obviously more than convinced that this was much more than a statement of theological position for Paul. How else could a man live as he lived and give as he gave and rejoice and rest and abide in such an other-worldly reality. There is no doubt about it. Paul was a man who was being sanctified by faith, sanctified by Truth. He was a person who knew, in a deep and genuine way, how the earth can be washed from the soul with the washing of the water of the Word. He was apprehending that for which He had been apprehended. He had climbed Jacob’s ladder, so to speak, into the heavens and becoming more and more a purely heavenly man.

This is sanctification. It’s a journey of the heart, an exodus of the soul. And it involves an inward departure from one kind of land and kind and relationship, and the discovery of another. Never forget God’s first words to Abraham.

***Gen 12:1** Now the LORD had said to Abram: “**Get out** of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.*

We just read Paul’s description of the same thing. Forgetting those things which are behind and apprehending, possessing those things which God is revealing, walking in those things that God reveals.

And if we turn to Colossians chapter 3 we see Paul instructing the church in this same journey.

***Col 3:1** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Here is this word “above” again. But He begins by saying, you were raised above. And it is because of what God has done, because of what the cross has accomplished in raising you above with Christ, that it is absolutely appropriate and essential for you to seek and see those things which are above, NOT on the things which are on the earth. Fix your gaze there, Paul says, on the things being revealed in this heavenly land. Fix your heart on the new order and nature and land that is the universe of Christ. Do not look back to where you are from.

So many of the types and shadows that God recorded in the Old Testament tell this same story. Abraham, do not look back to your country, kindred, and father’s house. Get out! And don’t take anything with you. Lot, do not look back to a place that I have condemned. Escape to a better land. Israel, do not look back to your land of slavery, a land I have judged. Set your heart on the Land that I have given you. Possess that land by faith. Forget the things that are behind you, possess that which is before you.

The author of Hebrews has this to say about these Old Covenant believers.

Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

All of this for them, for these Old Covenant saints, was in type and shadow. We know that. But for you and I, this is literal and real. It is not NATURAL. Remember, the natural journey is the shadow. The spiritual exodus, the high calling of God in Christ, THAT is the substance. The high calling of God for us is an invitation to dwell in the heavens, to live in the sight of God, to be found in Christ. And sanctification by faith, sanctification in Truth, this is our means of ascension. **We heed this calling when we allow the revelation of Christ by the Spirit of truth to awaken us to our heavenly country, and subsequently, to turn the lights out in the country of our native birth.**

I want to spend at least one more week talking about this. We'll pick up there next time.

Amen.