

## CHAPTER 49

### SANCTIFICATION

#### (~~SCRIPTURES~~ HEBREWS 10:15-18)

The verses which are now to be before us bring to a close the principal argument which the apostle was setting before the Hebrews; that which follows, partakes more of the nature of a series of exhortations, drawn from the thesis which had previously been established. The immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, seen in the glorious person of our great High Priest and the perfect efficacy of His sacrifice, had been fully demonstrated.

“Here we are come unto a full end of the dogmatical part of this epistle, a portion of Scripture filled with heavenly and glorious mysteries, the light of the church of the Gentiles, the glory of the people Israel, the foundation and bulwark of faith evangelical”  
(John Owen).

Immediately afterward that eminent expositor added, (words which most suitably express the writer’s own sentiments) the following: —

“I do therefore here, with all humility, and sense of my own weakness and utter inability for so great a work, thankfully own the guidance and assistance which hath been given to me in the interpretation of it, so far as it is, or may be of use unto the church, as a mere effect of sovereign and undeserved grace. From that alone it is, that having many and many a time been at an utter loss as to the mind of the Holy Spirit, and finding no relief in the worthy labors of others, He hath graciously answered my poor, weak supplications, in supplies of the light and evidence of truth.”

The relation of our present passage to what has been before us in the last article is this: in verses 11-14 the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice is declared: first, comparatively in 11-14, and then singly in 14; while in verses 15-17 a further proof or confirmation of this is given from the Old Testament Scriptures. So efficacious was the mediatorial work of Christ

that, “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”  
Said the Puritan Charnock,

“That one offering was of such infinite value that it perfectly purchased the taking away of sin, both in the guilt, filth, and power, and was a sufficient price for all the grace believers should need for their perfect sanctification to the end of the world. There was the satisfaction of His blood for the removal of our guilt, and a treasure of merit for the supply of our grace” (Volume 5, p. 231).

There is a further link between our preceding portion and the present one. In verse 14 the apostle had declared “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” now he describes those marks by which the “sanctified” are to be *identified*. Unto those who really value their souls and are deeply concerned about their eternal destiny, this is a vitally important consideration. How may I know that I am one of that favored company for whom the incarnate Son of God offered Himself a sacrifice for sin? What clear and conclusive evidence do I possess that I am among the “sanctified?” Answer to these weighty questions is furnished in the verses which we are now to ponder. May each reader join with the writer in begging God to grant him an honest heart and a discerning eye to see whether or no they describe what has been actually made good in his own experience.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (verses 15-18).

There are two parts to the assertion made in verse 14: first, “them that are sanctified”; second, such are “perfected forever.” In the proof-text which the apostle here gives, both of these are found, though in the inverse order: the “sanctified” are they in whose hearts God puts His laws; those who are “perfected forever” are they whose sins God remembers no more.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (verse 15).

“The foundation of the whole preceding discourse of the apostle, concerning the glory of the priesthood of Christ, and the efficacy of His sacrifice, was laid in the description of the new covenant,

whereof He was the Mediator, which was confirmed and ratified by His sacrifice, as the old covenant was by the blood of bulls and goats (<sup>390</sup>Hebrews 9:10-13). Having now abundantly proved and demonstrated what he designed concerning them both, His priesthood and His sacrifice, He gives us a confirmation of the whole, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in the description of that covenant which he had given before. And because the crisis to which he had brought his argument and disputation, was, that the Lord Christ, by reason of the dignity of His person and office, with the everlasting efficacy of His sacrifice, was to offer Himself but once, which virtually includes all that he had before taught and declared, including in it an immediate demonstration of the insufficiency of all those sacrifices which were often repeated, and consequently their removal out of the church; he returns unto those words of the Holy Spirit for the proof of this particular also” (J. Owen).

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (verse 15).

Three questions are suggested by these words.

**First**, *unto what* is the Holy Spirit a “Witness?”

**Second**, what is the “also” to be connected with — *who else* has witnessed to the same thing? Third, *how* does the Holy Spirit “witness?” Let us, then, seek answers to these queries.

Unto what is it that the Holy Spirit is here said to be a “Witness?” If we go back no farther than the preceding verse, the answer would be, unto the fact that the one satisfaction which has been made by the Redeemer secures the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified; what follows in verses 16-18 bears this out. Nevertheless, we are persuaded that it is necessary to look farther afield if we are to obtain the deeper and fuller answer. The satisfaction made by the Redeemer was the fulfilling of the Divine “will,” the performing of that which had been stipulated in the everlasting covenant; and it is of *that* the whole context is speaking. The Holy Spirit was present when that wondrous compact was made between the Father and the Mediator, and through Jeremiah He made known a part of its glorious promises. The proof of this will become clearer as we advance.

Second, “whereof the Holy Spirit *also* is a witness to us” looks back to verse 9. There we have the testimony of the Son unto the eternal decree

which God had made, and which He had come to execute; here (in verses 17, 18) that of the Spirit to what the Father had promised the Mediator He would do unto His covenant people. Thus, we may here behold the three persons of the Godhead concurring. Yet there is such a fullness to the words of Scripture that we do not think what has just been pointed out exhausts the scope of this word “also.” The leading thought of the context (and of the epistle) is the sufficiency, finality, and efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ. *That was “witnessed”* to when the Mediator “*sat down on the right hand of God*” (verse 12); and the Holy Spirit is *also* a witness to us of the same blessed fact by means of His work of sanctification in the hearts and minds of those for whom Christ died.

As to *how the Spirit witnesses to us*, the first method is by means of the written Word; specifically, by what He gave out by the prophet Jeremiah. The apostle had argued the *sufficiency* of Christ’s sacrifice from its singularity (verse 12), in contrast from the many sacrifices of Judaism (verse 11); and the *finality* of it from the fact that He was now “*sat down,*” indicating that His work of oblation was finished. To this the Hebrews might object that what the apostle had pointed out were but plausible reasonings, to which they could not acquiesce unless they were confirmed by the clear testimony of Scripture; and therefore did he now quote once more from the memorable prophecy of Jeremiah 31, which clearly established the conclusions he had drawn. *How* the terms of that prophecy ratified his deductions will appear in the sequel.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us.” As we have seen, the first reference here is to what is recorded in <sup><26131></sup>Jeremiah 31:31-34. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures, for

“The prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake *moved by the Holy Spirit*” (<sup><61021></sup>2 Peter 1:21).

But more, the Holy Scriptures are also the testimony of the Holy Spirit because of His presence and authority in them continually. As we read the written Word, we are to recognize the voice of the Spirit of truth speaking to us immediately out of them. As we do this, we shall recognize that Word as the final court of appeal in *all* matters of conduct. That Word alone is that whereunto our faith is to be resolved.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit is also a witness *to us.*” The last two words need to be carefully observed in these days, when there are so many who (under

the guise of “rightly dividing the Word”) would rob the children of God of a part of their needed bread — let the reader be much on his guard against such men. What the prophet Jeremiah gave out was for the people of God in *his* day. True, and hundreds of years later the apostle did not hesitate to say that what Jeremiah wrote was equally “*to us*”; note particularly, not only “for” us, but “*to us*”! The whole of God’s Word, beginning to end, was written for the good of His people until the end of the world.

But further, the Holy Spirit is not only a Witness unto us of the everlasting covenant and of the efficacy of Christ’s offering through the written Word objectively, but also by His application of that Word to us subjectively. As said the apostle unto the Corinthians,

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables *of the heart*”  
(~~400~~ 2 Corinthians 3:3).

A cause is known by its effects, a tree by its fruits; so the value and virtue of Christ’s sacrifice are witnessed to us by the Spirit through the powerful workings of His grace on our hearts. Every grace implanted by the Spirit in the Christian’s soul was purchased by the obedience and blood of Christ, and are living evidences of the worth of them.

“For after that He had said before” (verse 15).

The particular proof-text from Jeremiah which the apostle was about to quote is prefaced by these words of his own, as also is the clause “saith the Lord” in the next verse the apostle’s language. If it be asked, *what* was it that was said “before?” the answer is, “This is the covenant that I will make with them.” If it be inquired, what is that which is said *after*? even this: “I will put My laws into their hearts” etc. The particular point to be observed is, that these Divine mercies of God’s putting His laws into our hearts and forgiving our sins, are the immediate fruits of Christ’s sacrifice, but more remotely, are the fulfillment of God’s covenant-promises unto the Mediator.

The everlasting covenant which God made with Christ is *the ground* of all the good which He does to His people. Proof of this statement is supplied in many a scripture, which is little pondered in these days. For example, in ~~400~~ Exodus 6:5 we find Jehovah saying to Moses, “I have remembered My covenant,” which is rendered as the reason for His bringing of Israel out of

Egypt. Again, in <sup><49478></sup>Psalm 105:8 we are told, “He hath remembered His covenant forever.” So in <sup><43160></sup>Ezekiel 16:60 God declares,

“Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.”

While in Luke 1, we read in the prophecy of Zacharias,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy to our fathers, and *to remember His holy covenant*” (verses 68-72).

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord” (verse 16).

The reference is to the “new covenant” of <sup><24831></sup>Jeremiah 31:31, so called not because it was new *made*, for with respect to its original constitution it was made with the elect in Christ their Head from all eternity (<sup><50001></sup>Titus 1:1, 2); nor as newly *revealed*, for it was made known in measure to the O.T. saints; but it is so referred to in distinction from the former *administration* of it, which had waxen old and vanished away. It is also called “new” because of the “new heart,” “new spirit,” “new song” which it bestows, and because of new ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s supper) which have displaced the old ones of circumcision and the passover-supper. Further, it may suitably be designated as “new” because its vigor and efficacy are perpetual; it will never be antiquated or give place to another.

“I will put My law into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (verse 16).

And who are the favored ones in whom God works thus? Those whom He eternally set apart (<sup><40004></sup>Ephesians 1:4), those whom He gave to the Mediator (<sup><48176></sup>John 17:6), those for whom Christ died: “whom He did predestinate, those He also called” (<sup><48180></sup>Romans 8:30). These, and these only, are the ones with whom God deals so graciously. Others may, through religious instruction or personal effort, acquire a theoretical

acquaintance with the laws of God, but only His elect have a vital knowledge of Him.

“I will put My laws into their hearts.” As we deem this expression of tremendous importance, we will endeavor to explain it according to the measure of light which God has granted us thereon. First, it will aid us to an understanding thereof if we consider the case of Adam. When he left the Creator’s hands the law of God was in his heart, or, in other words, he was endowed with all sorts of holy properties, instincts and inclinations unto whatsoever God did command, and an antipathy against all He forbade. That was the “law” of the nature of his heart. The laws of God in Adam were Adam’s original *nature*, or constitution of His spirit and soul, as it is the law of nature in beasts to love their young, and of birds to build their nests.

“When God created man at first, He gave him not an outward law written in letters or delivered in words, but an inward law put into his heart, and concreated with him, and wrought in the frame of his soul. And the whole substance of this law of God, the mass of it, was not merely dictates or beams of light in his understanding, directing what to do; but also real, lively, and spiritual dispositions, and inclinations in his will and affections, carrying him on to what was so directed, as to pray, love God, and fear Him; to seek His glory in a spiritual and holy manner. They were inward abilities suited to every duty” (T. Goodwin, Volume 6, p. 402).

The external command of <sup><0027></sup>Genesis 2:17 was designed as the *test* of his responsibility; what God had graciously placed within him, was the equipment for the discharging of his responsibility.

Should it be inquired, where is the scripture which teaches that God placed His laws in the heart of unfallen Adam? it is sufficient to reply that <sup><0408></sup>Psalm 40:8 presents *Christ* as saying, “Thy law is within My heart,” and <sup><0514></sup>Romans 5:14 declares that Adam was “*the figure* of Him that was to come.” But more, just as we may discover what grain the earth bears by the stubble which is found in the field, so we may ascertain what was in unfallen man by the ruins of what is yet to be seen in fallen and corrupt humanity. <sup><0214></sup>Romans 2:14 says the Gentiles “do *by nature* the things contained in the law”: their very conscience tells them that immorality and murder are crimes. Thus, as an evidence that the law of God was originally

the very “nature” of Adam, we have the shadow of it in the hearts of all men.

Alas, Adam did not continue as God created him: he fell, and the consequence was that his heart was corrupted, his very “nature” vitiated, so that the things he once loved he now hated, and what he should have hated, he now served. Thus it is with all of his fallen descendants: being

“alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (<sup><4048></sup>Ephesians 4:18)

their carnal mind “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (<sup><4007></sup>Romans 8:7). Instead of that holy “nature” or spiritual propensities and properties, man is now in-dwelt and dominated by *sin*; hence, <sup><4072></sup>Romans 7:23 teaches us that sin is a “law” in our members, namely, “the law of sin and death” (<sup><4000></sup>Romans 8:2). And thus it is that in <sup><2470></sup>Jeremiah 17:1 (as the opposite of <sup><5806></sup>Hebrews 10:16) sin and corruption in the heart is said to be “*written* with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond.”

Now in regeneration and sanctification the “image” of God, after which Adam was originally created, is again stamped upon the soul: see <sup><5080></sup>Colossians 3:10; the laws of God are written on the Christian’s heart, so that it becomes his very “nature” to serve, obey, please, honor, and glorify God. Because the law of God is renewed again in the soul, it is termed the “law of the mind” (<sup><4072></sup>Romans 7:23), for the mind is now regulated by the authority of God and turns as instinctively to Him as does the sunflower to the sun, and as the needle answers to the loadstone. Thus, the renewed heart “*delights* in the law of God” (<sup><4072></sup>Romans 7:22), and “serves the law of God” (<sup><4072></sup>Romans 7:25), it being its very “nature” so to do.

This wondrous change which takes place in each of those for whom Christ died is here attributed directly and absolutely to God: “I *will* put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds *will I* write them.” This is much more than a bare offer being made unto men, far beyond an ineffectual invitation which is to be received. It is an invincible and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, which thoroughly transforms the favored subjects to it. Only He who first made man, can remake him. None but the Almighty can repair the awful damage which the Fall wrought, counteract the dreadful power of sin, deliver the heart from the lusts of the flesh, the thralldom of the

world, the bondage of Satan, and rewrite upon it His holy law, so that He will be loved supremely and served sincerely and gladly.

“I will put My laws into their hearts.” This is in contrast from those who were under the old, or Sinaitic covenant. There the “ten words” were engraven upon tables of stone, not only to intimate thereby their fixed and permanent authority, but also to figure forth the *hardness* of the hearts of the unregenerate people to whom they were given. But under the new covenant — that is, the *administration* of the everlasting covenant and the *application* of its grace to God’s elect in this Gospel dispensation — God gives efficacy to His holy law in the souls of His people. First, by subduing and largely removing the enmity of the natural heart against Him and his law, which subduing is figuratively spoken of as a circumcising of the heart (<sup><6306></sup>Deuteronomy 30:6) and a “taking away the stony heart” (<sup><3336></sup>Ezekiel 36:26). Second, by implanting the principle of obedience to His law, which is figuratively referred to as the giving of “an heart of flesh” and the “writing of His laws upon the heart.”

Observe very particularly, dear reader, that God here says *not* “I will put My promises” but “My *laws* in their hearts.” He will not relinquish His claims: unreserved subjection to His will is what His justice requires and what His power secures. The grand triumph of grace is, that “enmity” against the law (<sup><4807></sup>Romans 8:7) is displaced by “love” for the law (<sup><1337></sup>Psalm 119:97). This is it which explains that word in <sup><1907></sup>Psalm 19:7, “The *law* of the Lord is perfect *converting* the soul.” It will probably surprise most of our readers (alas that it should do so) to be told that the Gospel never yet “converted” anybody. No, it is the law which the Spirit uses to convict of rebellion against God, and not until the soul penitently repudiates and forsakes his rebellion, is it ready for the message of peace which the Gospel brings.

The careful reader will notice there is a slight difference between the wording of <sup><3810></sup>Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16. In the former it is “I will put My laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts,” but in the passage now before us the two clauses are reversed. One reason for this is as follows: <sup><3810></sup>Hebrews 8:10 give the Divine *order of operation*: the mind is first informed, and then the heart is reformed. Moreover, in <sup><3810></sup>Hebrews 8:10 it is a question of *knowing God*, and for that, the understanding must be enlightened before the affections can be drawn out of Him — none will love an unknown God. The Spirit beans by conveying to the regenerate an

efficacious knowledge of the authority and excellency of God's laws, giving them a powerful realization both of their binding force and spirituality; and then He communicates a love for them, so that their hearts are heartily inclined toward them.

When the apostle defines the seat of the corruption of our nature, he places it in the "mind" and "heart": "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their *mind*; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their *heart*." Therefore does the Divine work of sanctification, or the renovating of our natures, consist of the rectifying both of the mind and heart, and this, by furnishing them with the principles of faith, love, and adherence to God. Thus, *the grace of the new covenant* (purchased for His people by Christ) is as extensive to repair our "nature" as sin is (in its residence and power) to deprave us. God desireth truth "in the inward parts" (<sup>195106</sup>Psalm 51:6) — not that outward conformity to His law may be dispensed with, for that is required too, but unless it proceed from an inward love for His law, the external actions cannot be accepted by Him.

"From these things we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this first branch of the first promise of the covenant. And this is the effectual operation of His Spirit, in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, whereby they are habitually made conformable unto the whole law of God, that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, and enabled unto all acts and duties that are required of us. And this is the first grace promised and communicated unto us by virtue of this covenant, as it was necessary that so it should be. For,

1. the mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience.
2. The proper and peculiar actings of the mind in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actings of the will and affections, much more before all outward practices.
3. The depravation of the mind is such by blindness, darkness, vanity and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace upon the mind" (John Owen).

In <sup>81016</sup>Hebrews 10:16 the heart is mentioned before the mind because the Spirit is here giving the Divine standard for us to measure ourselves by: it

is the test whereby we may ascertain whether or no we are among the “sanctified,” who have been perfected forever by the one offering of Christ. An intellectual knowledge of God’s laws is no proof of regeneration, but a genuine heart-acquaintance with them is. The questions I need to honestly face are such as these: Is there within me that which answers to the Law without me? That is, is it actually and truly my desire and determination to be regulated and controlled by the revealed will of God? Is it the deepest longing of my soul, and the chief business of my life, to please and serve God? Is it the great burden of my prayers that He will work in me “both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure?” Is my deepest grief occasioned by my failure to be altogether holy in my wishes and words and ways? Experimentally, the more we love God, the more shall we discern the excellency of His law.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (verse 17).

Notice again the *order* of our passage: what is found here comes *after* verse 16, and not before. In the order of grace, justification (of which forgiveness is the negative side) precedes sanctification, but in the ,believer’s apprehension it is otherwise: I can only ascertain God’s justifying of me, by making sure I have within the fruits of His sanctifying me. I must study the effects to discover the cause. In like manner, God elects before He calls, or regenerates, but I have to make my *calling* “sure” in order to obtain evidence of my election: see ~~6010~~2 Peter 1:10. There are many who give no sign of God’s law being written in their hearts, who nevertheless claim to have had their sins forgiven by Him; but such are sadly deceived. Scripture entitles none to regard themselves as Divinely pardoned save those who have been saved from self-will and self-pleasing.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” These words must not be understood to signify that the sins of God’s people have vanished from His *essential* mind, but rather that they will never be recalled by Him as He exercises His office as *Judge*. Our Substitute having already discharged our liabilities and Justice having been fully satisfied, payment cannot be demanded twice over.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (~~4800~~Romans 8:1).

This is the negative side of the believer's justification, that his sins are *not* reckoned to his account; the positive aspect is that the perfect law-righteousness of Christ *is* imputed to him.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin”  
(verse 18).

Here the apostle draws the irrefutable conclusion from the premises he had so fully established. Before pondering it, let us give a brief summary of these wonderful verses. First, the everlasting covenant is the foundation of all God's gracious dealings with His elect. Second, that eternal compact between the Father and the Mediator is now being administered under the “new covenant.” Third, the design of this covenant is not to set apart a people unto external holiness only, but to so sanctify them that they should be holy in heart and life. Fourth, this sanctification of the elect is effected by the communication of effectual grace unto them for their conversion and obedience, which is here (under a figure) spoken of as God's putting His laws into their hearts and writing them in their minds. Fifth, this practical sanctification is God's *continuation* of that work of grace which He begins in us at regeneration — our glorification is the *completing* of the same, for then the last remains of sin will be removed from us, and we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of His Son.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” These words give the apostle's application of the Scripture quoted from Jeremiah, which was made for the express purpose of demonstrating the perfection of Christ's sacrifice. The conclusion is irresistible: the one offering of Christ has secured that the grace of the everlasting covenant *shall be* communicated unto all of those for whom He died, both in the sanctifying and justifying of their persons. Since then their sins are all gone from before the face of God, *no* further sacrifice is needed.