

1. God Himself does it by Love

"The God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly." ... "Faithful is He that calleth." (1 Thess. v. 23, 24, R.V.)

This is our first declaration. It is God that does the work. The God of peace: not, be it incidentally noted, the God of power or love, but of rest. The God who giveth rest, Himself sanctifies us. *It is nothing that we do or struggle into.* It is not a mental position which we adopt and then hold on to: it is a real thing, a practical emancipation from inward evil which God gives to the soul.

Will you notice with me the three words in verse 24? "Faithful."—"Calleth."—"Do." God's *faithfulness*, God's *love* and God's *power* are all taxed to the utmost in accomplishing this great work. Here for the moment I want to emphasise the second of these words, "Calleth," the indication of His love. "God commandeth men everywhere to repent," but here He *calleth*. **When John Wesley was asked** when one should preach the *doctrine* of entire sanctification, he replied, "Never until men are hungry and seeking for it, and when we do, let it always be by drawing rather than by driving." Yes, He calls us, woos us, allures us, invites us to enter the land of rest from inbred sin. I am always suspicious of the modern method of trying to screw people up to a state of consecration. (I am far more than merely suspicious .. TP) The Lord Jesus in dealing with men and women always approached them in such a way that of their own accord they confessed their sin and need. His treatment of the woman of Samaria is a beautiful instance of this gracious method. He gave her an opportunity to run away from Him. It was so, too, as He dealt with the woman taken in adultery. (John viii.) How easy it would have been for her to slink away when all eyes were directed to the runaway Pharisees, but faith in His tenderness and grace held her fast, till His pardoning, sanctifying grace had done its work.

He draws you now. He calls you, poor, defeated, discouraged soul. He tells you that it is He Himself who does the work, the very God of Peace Himself.

One of the most wonderful themes in the Word of God is His message through the prophet Jeremiah. Turn, will you, to the opening chapter of that prophecy. Is it conceivable, he says, that a man who has put away his wife for unfaithfulness and sin, will ever take her back again? Why, the very land would be polluted (iii. 1). But yet He cries, "I will receive you if only you will return. Only acknowledge your iniquity." That is the sole condition. His plaint was, "They have forgotten Me days without number." The reason why we can't get deliverance and victory is that we will not return with all our hearts, *just as we are*—sin and all—to Him. Like the prodigal of old, with our rags upon us He bids us come, and then He himself will sanctify us wholly. This is the first secret of inheriting the blessing. How hard it is to believe this wonderful thing! So poisoned have been our hearts that we find it almost impossible appropriately to believe that God blesses so.

May all the poison of distrust, suspicion and unbelief be extracted from us, and heavenly, holy faith infused within our wounded, weakened souls.

So:

- Preachers must "keep their powder dry", and not get the guns out until the quarry is mature.
- Preachers must simmer down and work in accord with His lowly Spirit's convicting power.

Until God's people enter His Rest, some wilfulness remains within. One consequence of this is that when a soul is "driven", the natural reaction is self-defence. They instinctively avoid attempts to overwhelm the will.

And this is just as God would have it. Until the soul enters His Rest, that soul remains in the valley of decision about Christ. The decision to serve Him with the whole heart is the most important decision an established believer can make. It needs to be dealt with seriously and honestly. No trifling or interference is helpful, for "A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still.", and has been made more defensive: more skeptical and guarded within.

The "Over-preaching" often found in the Holiness churches naturally makes folks resist going farther. TP