

Expository Tracts, No. 170.

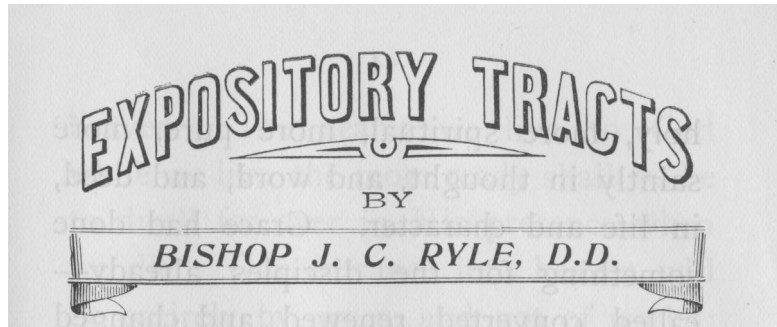
SANCTIFICATION
THROUGH THE WORD.

BEING
THOUGHTS ON JOHN XVII. 17-19.

BY THE LATE
BISHOP J. C. RYLE, D.D.

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SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE WORD.

JOHN XVII. 17-19.

17. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.
18. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.
19. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

WE should mark, in this passage, *how Jesus prays that His people may be sanctified*. "Sanctify them," He says, "through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."

We need not doubt that, in this place at any rate, the word "sanctify" means "make holy." It is a prayer that the Father would make His people more holy, more spiritual, more pure, more saintly in thought, and word, and deed, in life and character. Grace had done something for the disciples already—called, converted, renewed, and changed them. The great Head of the Church prays that the work of grace may be carried higher and further, and that His people may be more thoroughly sanctified and made holy in body, soul, and spirit—in fact, more like Himself.

Surely we need not say much to show the matchless wisdom of this prayer. More holiness is the very thing to be desired for all servants of Christ. Holy living is the great proof of the reality of Christianity. Men may refuse to see the truth of our arguments, but they cannot evade the evidence of a godly life. Such a life adorns religion, and makes it beautiful, and sometimes wins those who are not "won by the Word." (1 Peter iii. 1.) Holy living trains Christians for heaven. The nearer we live to God while we live, the more ready shall we be to dwell for ever in His presence when we die. Our entrance into heaven will be entirely by grace, and not of works; but heaven itself would be no heaven to us if we entered it with an unsanctified character. Our hearts must be in tune for heaven if we are to enjoy it.

There must be a moral “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light,” as well as a title. (Col. i. 12.) Christ’s blood alone can give us a title to enter the inheritance. Sanctification must give us a capacity to enjoy it.

Who, in the face of such facts as these, need wonder that increased sanctification should be the first thing that Jesus asks for His people? Who that is really taught of God can fail to know that holiness is happiness, and that those who walk with God most closely are always those who walk with Him most comfortably? Let no man deceive us with vain words in this matter. He who despises holiness, and neglects good works, under the vain pretence of giving honour to justification by faith, shows plainly that he has not the mind of Christ.

We praise and bless Thee, gracious Lord,
Our Saviour kind and true,
For all the old things passed away,
For all Thou hast made new.

The old security is gone
In which so long we lay;
The sleep of death Thou hast dispelled,
The darkness rolled away.

New hopes, new purposes, desires,
And joys, Thy grace has given;
Old ties are broken from the earth,
New ones attach to heaven.

But yet how much must be destroyed,
How much renewed must be,
Ere we can fully stand complete
In likeness, Lord, to Thee;

Ere to Jerusalem above,
The holy place, we come,
Where nothing sinful or defiled
Shall ever find a home.

Thou, only Thou, must carry on
The work Thou hast begun;
Of Thine own strength Thou must impart

In Thine own ways to run.

Ah, leave us not! From day to day
Revive, restore again;
Our feeble steps do Thou direct,
Our enemies restrain.

Whate'er would tempt the soul to stray
Or separate from Thee,
That, Lord, remove, however dear
To the poor heart it be.