

Entire Sanctification as a Bundle of Possibilities

by Charles Ewing Brown

Charles Ewing Brown delves into the doctrine of entire sanctification, acknowledging the disappointment some sincere teachers and believers have faced in not fully realizing the promised results. He explores the gap between expectations and reality, attributing it to misunderstandings about the cleansing of nature and destruction of carnality in sanctification. Brown emphasizes the importance of a continuous response to God's grace, using analogies to illustrate the varying outcomes of the sanctified experience. He highlights the need to seek the Giver, not just the gift, and discusses the power received through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, focusing on its role in witnessing for Christ and living a life of moral integrity and spiritual strength.

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Transcript

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points: - "The gift of the Holy Spirit as a personal relationship" - "Analogies of friendship and potential" - "Encouragement to pursue holiness" - heading: "V" points: - "Features of the victorious life in holiness" - "The power of the Holy Spirit" - "The distinction between spiritual power and worldly power" - heading: "VI" points: - "The importance of loving the giver, not just the gift" - "The call to praise God in all circumstances" - "Conclusion and encouragement to seek deeper relationship with God" faq: - q: "What is entire sanctification?" a: "Entire sanctification is the experience of receiving new power and grace in one's life, often viewed as a second work of grace." - q: "Why do some sanctified individuals still struggle?" a: "Many misunderstand the nature of sanctification, leading to unrealistic expectations about the eradication of natural impulses." - q: "How does the Parable of the Sower relate to sanctification?" a: "It illustrates that while the seed of grace is the same, the outcomes vary based on the condition of the heart." - q: "What is the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification?" a: "The Holy Spirit empowers believers to witness for Christ and live a life of holiness, beyond mere emotional experiences." - q: "How should we view our relationship with God?" a: "It should be seen as a personal relationship, focusing on the giver rather than just the gifts He provides." quotes: - "SEEK NOT THE GIFT BUT THE GIVER" - "Remember, these are possibilities whose lack of realization should inspire one to more ardent zeal, rather than create a sense of failure and guilt." - "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." applicationPoints: - "Seek a deeper relationship with God rather than focusing solely on the gifts He provides." - "Recognize that struggles in the sanctified life do not equate to failure or hypocrisy." - "Embrace the journey of faith as a continuous response to God's grace and empowerment." keywords: - "entire sanctification" - "second work of grace" - "Holy Spirit" - "personal relationship" - "spiritual power" - "victorious life" - "faith" - "grace" ---

The doctrine of entire sanctification has been preached on the American continent in the Wesleyan tradition as the second work of grace, or as a second crisis in Christian experience, for about two hundred years; and while doubtless its opponents would admit that it has on occasion produced astonishing results, an unbiased and fair-minded critic must admit that many of its most sincere teachers and professors have felt deep and widespread disappointment with the results in their own individual experience and observation. In many instances there has been a gap in practice between what the best teachers promised and the actual results obtained by the average Christian who claimed the experience. How shall we explain this simple, but undeniable, fact? First of all, it might be said that even if it were a matter of secular discipline of the mind, results would naturally be widely different. One man studies art intently and gets very little out of it. Some students will tell you that they got nothing from their mathematics teacher. Others found their history course nearly worthless. Men who have taken courses in memory training have forgotten to put on their overcoats when they left the class the last time. And no doubt even a few students of courses in winning friends and influencing people have finished quite as tactless and as provocative in manner as any rugged individualist could wish. It is just not in the nature of things for the minds of all men to respond to mental or spiritual stimuli and experiences in the same manner.

Therefore we make bold to say that even on the lower level of secular psychology we are not justified in condemning a doctrine or mental discipline because it does not produce uniform results in the various types of mind which are subjected to it. But entire sanctification is not a secular doctrine; it is by definition an experience of the introduction of new power and grace into human life. If it be true that many who have sought this experience have failed to realize their expectations, we have a puzzling problem. What is the use of preaching about mountain-top experiences and fullness of joy, when multitudes of those who profess entire sanctification seem to suffer even more than their neighbors? Why preach about intruding

oceans of crystal power and victory when we know so many sanctified people who are struggling, perplexed, confused, and anxious, apparently just like other men?

Among orthodox teachers the stock answer to this question has been that these suffering people were not really wholly sanctified. Then we have added to the perplexity and sorrow of these earnest people by accusing them of hypocrisy, thus placing them under a strain of prayer and ascetic effort to lift themselves to some imaginary type of blessedness.

To me there seems to be a better way, in which we shall be realistically honest with ourselves and perfectly candid in our report to the outside world.

Many seekers for the experience have misunderstood the meaning of the cleansing of our nature and the destruction of carnality. They have taken this experience to signify that the natural appetites, by which physical life is preserved and continued, will be eradicated and destroyed by entire sanctification. A little thought would convince anyone of the impossibility of the realization of such an experience. Without hunger the body would waste away and die. Without sex appetite the race would cease from the earth. Without fear men would utterly destroy the life of mankind from the earth. It is the exaggeration and feverish poisoning of these impulses which is cured by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

While it is correct that the instinctive pattern of holy living is restored to the heart by the restoration of the image of God in sanctification, it is important to remember that the possession of human intelligence modifies the deterministic control of instinct in the case of a human being. Here is an illustration. A hungry bird will carry a luscious morsel of food to deposit in the mouth of its nestling. Now it is easy for the bird to do this, because it has an instinctive pattern of behavior wrought in its very nature and it has no intelligence sufficient to balance its own impulse of hunger against the instinctive urge to feed its young. But if that bird were suddenly gifted with human intelligence, naturally it would begin to think about the comparative advantages of feeding its young or of satisfying its own hunger. And we may be sure that to go hungry to feed its young would be a harder thing for the bird to do if it were possessed of human intelligence. And we may also be sure that many birds would obey the impulse to satisfy their individual hunger rather than the instinctive urge to feed their young.

I emphasize this point, for so far as I know, it has never before been introduced into the literature of the doctrine of entire sanctification. Yet a little consideration will prove that it is true. Further thought will make it very apparent why even a sanctified man, who has the instinctive pattern of holiness restored to his heart, will often, if not always, find a tension between his simple physical impulses and the organized pattern of religious instinct implanted into his nature by the grace of God. We hope that earnest Christians will ponder this explanation well as a solution of one of the most troublesome problems of the sanctified life and of the origin of sin in a holy being.

Too many people have neglected the continuous response which a sanctified man must make to the indwelling grace of God. Jesus explained it all in the Parable of the Sower. The seed sown represents the whole work of grace in the heart, and thus could be applied to the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the endowment of spiritual power; although the seed is all very much alike, it does not produce anything like uniform results. Jesus explains carefully that its historical outcome shows returns of thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold. (See Matt. 13:8.) Here Jesus inferentially rebukes all this expectation that the baptism of the Holy Spirit would produce uniform results in all who experience it. And it is important to remember that the field which produced only a thirty-fold increase was not condemned as an apostate and useless piece of

ground. It was in its way an example, if not of the best, at least of the satisfactory Christian experience. Notice that Christ teaches with crystal clearness here that the returns are not in anywise limited by the goodness of the seed or the generosity with which it is sown; they are limited by the nature of the soil itself. It is a great mistake for teachers of the doctrine of entire sanctification to infer that all its possessors will realize its possibilities a hundred-fold. Doubtless that is a goal to be sought, but failure to realize it should not be condemned as apostasy.

One could extend this discussion by many similar analogies. Back in the nineties, a young man in Detroit saved and borrowed \$20,000. This money he invested in the Ford Motor Company, and while he was still a comparatively young man he sold out his stock in that company for \$33,000,000. At the very time that James Couzens invested \$20,000 in the automobile business, other young men in Detroit were in possession of similar amounts of money. Their money was just as good. It was issued by Uncle Sam. It was in no way different from the money held by Mr.

Couzens. But Mr. Couzens realized, perhaps, just about all the financial possibilities of his money, and most of the others failed to do so. Some made only reasonable gains: others lost all that they had. And so it is with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A great deal depends upon how the individual uses the gift of the Spirit so freely given. Undoubtedly the possibilities are great, but those who receive should bestow more thought and prayer upon the realization of the vast potentialities of the gift.

SEEK NOT THE GIFT BUT THE GIVER

No apologies need to be made for presenting the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the experience of entire sanctification, as a gift. This is scriptural language. Moreover, it is borne out by numerous spiritual analogies in the parables of our Lord. It is of great importance that all who are concerned with this great truth should understand clearly and emphasize fully the fact that this is a very peculiar and unique gift. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not the gift of a thing, such as a bushel of wheat or a ton of dynamite or a million dollars. Such figures are not entirely inaccurate, because they do represent the truth that the gift of the Holy Spirit is an endowment of power that puts the soul in possession of enormous potentialities.

But we have never realized the meaning of entire sanctification so long as we think of it merely as a thing which does certain things. Rather, it is a man's personal experience in which he receives the gift of a person, not given as an ancient slave-owner would give away one of his slaves, but given as today a lover gives himself to his bride, or as a great man gives himself in warm and confiding friendship to another man whom he regards as morally worthy of that friendship.

Throughout this whole discussion we have found that most of our difficulties are relieved by thinking of our relationship to God as a personal one. Here the parables, analogies, and figures of religion come nearest to the absolute truth and are freest from the possibility of misunderstanding. If we think of the baptism of the Holy Ghost as the special, kindly, loving presentation of the Third Person of the Godhead to its recipients in the wealth of a rich and enduring friendship, we have solved most of the problems raised regarding the lack of uniformity in the results of this experience.

Here is a helpful illustration. Take the great industrial leaders and men of vast fortune. Although they are compelled to guard themselves against infringement upon their time by thousands of idle hangers-on and beggars of every description, it will generally remain true that each of them has a considerable number of friends to whom he continues to give himself throughout life. Let us study these friends as illustrations of the lack of uniformity in the sanctified experience. Among them, here and there, will be men who through

this friendship have risen to places of enormous power and prestige in the American industrial world. The head of the great corporation has smiled upon them and they have become powerful executives and multimillionaires in their turn, and yet this head of the corporation has humble friends, some of whom perhaps are shabby men who have never known much success in life and whose only boast is that they are personal friends of the head of the corporation. They have the gift of the captain's friendship, but they have never been able to utilize the possibilities of that friendship to anything like the extent which other men have. Doubtless, like all other parables, this parable can be misconstrued. We can say that the captain of industry was unfair to his humble friends. Ruling out that possibility, is it not reasonable to believe that many of his humble friends were well known by him to be incapable of the heavy burdens of responsibility which his power made it possible for him to bestow, but which his wisdom and friendship would not allow him to impose upon a weak friend? If the possibilities of friendship with a captain of industry are so vast and yet so variously realized in practice, is it any wonder that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the gift of the Comforter, also presents a bundle of possibilities which few men have ever realized in anything but the smallest way? Lack of this complete realization should not be construed as apostasy from the faith, or hypocrisy in the life. As a sanctified man surveys the possibilities of a life in holiness, it should be an encouragement to possess the land.

FEATURES OF THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

Having shown clearly that not all sanctified people realize the possibilities which the experience holds, and guarding against fanaticism and Pharisaism on the one hand, and doubt, anxiety, and self-condemnation on the other, it is well to make an optimistic view of the glorious possibilities of faith in the life of holiness opened up to the believer in the experience of entire sanctification. Remember, these are possibilities whose lack of realization should inspire one to more ardent zeal, rather than create a sense of failure and guilt. As we unfold a map of the mountains of Canaan, it is not for anyone to ask who lives on such a high plane as that, but rather to say, "By the grace of God that is my inheritance, and I will realize it more and more as long as I live."

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST GIVES POWER

Many years ago I read in a religious periodical an article that emphasized the fact that Christians should not pray for power, but pray first of all for purity; for when purity of heart is realized then power will naturally come and that power will be useful and a blessing. Though this is a good truth to remember, we must not forget that one of the most outstanding features of the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit was an endowment of power: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

Perhaps this "power" has created more confusion of thought than any other word in the teaching of this doctrine. First of all, we should remember that it is certainly not power to do just anything a man might wish to do. It is not power to make money; it is not power to avoid suffering; it is not power to bend others to our own will; it is not power to conquer our enemies nor to amass wealth. It is not intellectual power, which makes a man a scholar or a brilliant genius. It is not necessarily power to speak with eloquence and invincible persuasion. It is certainly not such power as Samson had, which made him able to carry the gates of Gath upon his back and to push the temple of Dagon over by physical force.

To define the power is by no means to deny it. A suggestion as to the kind of power it is may be seen in the text cited from Acts, which continues as follows: "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in

Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8). That seems to answer our question. The power received by the soul at Pentecost is the power to witness for Christ. Eventually this involves a good many things. It involves the power to live an upright, moral, and worthy life; for this is the first requisite to witnessing. The witness who appears in God's witness chair must be a man with clean hands and a pure heart and a reputation of honor and integrity before the world.

Furthermore, in such a life there must be power to overcome hatred, discouragement, bitterness, and the melancholy and gloom of life. "Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." The exterior fabric of an honorable and noble life must constantly be rebuilt within by the beauty of a clean, courageous, and pure experience. This takes power.

This is a power which exalts a man above the baffling, frustrating circumstances of life. Undoubtedly this is a high claim, but nearly all of the great saints have testified to its reality. Madame Guyon, when in prison for Christ's sake, maintained a serene and cheerful heart and wrote a beautiful poem of herself as Christ's songbird shut up to sing for him. That takes power.

Incidental to this witnessing for Christ, there might be times when the Spirit's power would take the form of the prophetic gift of inspired preaching, in which the soul is caught up in rapture, filled with strange, lovely, bright and beautiful thoughts which are uttered with a passionate fervor that the oratory of trained speakers can never approach. In all cases, this power is simply the manifestation of the Spirits to aid us in witnessing for our beloved and exalted Lord. How foolish it is to think that this power should mean hysterical jumping and jerking and falling into trances. The Apostle Paul taught differently: "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7). The power that accompanies Pentecost would rather strengthen the mind, quicken the intellect, warm the heart, elevate and intensify the intellectual capacity of its possessor. If in the Bible or in Christian history it could be shown that any spiritual person became hysterical and temporarily lost his reason, that would only prove how far that particular saint fell below the standard of spirituality lifted up by the Bible itself.

The greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, if we except John the Baptist, was Moses. He was the prophet whom the Messiah should most resemble (Deut. 18:15). Yet Moses never had one moment when his intellect was darkened by hysterical emotional excitement. He talked to God "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33:11), but always in the full blaze of a brilliant and clear-seeing intellect. Jesus is the supreme prophet of all time, both in ancient Israel and the Christian church, and he was the one of whom it was said, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets" (Matt. 12:19). Never once did he become hysterical, or unduly excited. Never once did he fall in unconsciousness. Always his mind was clear under the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps we cannot too much exalt the blessed work of the Spirit, sending streams of healing, of peace, and of joy through what was once the wilderness of the human heart and making the desert blossom as the rose. Nevertheless, all Christians must be on guard against loving our Lord for his gift, rather than loving him as the giver. We love him for what he is, rather than for what he does for us. Remember, Judas was one disciple who prized Christ for what he thought he could get out of following him, rather than for what Christ was in himself. Thomas a' Kempis, who died in 1471, wrote as follows: Many love Jesus so long as adversities happen not.

Many praise and bless him, so long as they receive any consolations from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind.

But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.

And although he should never be willing to give them comfort, they notwithstanding would ever praise him, and wish to be always giving thanks. [41]

41 Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, p. 104

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