

# Full Salvation Immediately Attainable

by Daniel Steele

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*Believers can experience immediate salvation and entire sanctification in this life through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Titus 2:14, Hebrews 13:20, James 1:4, 1 Peter 5:10, 1 John 1:9, 1 John 4:16

**Topics:** "Sanctification", "Holiness"

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## Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the possibility of attaining complete purity and sanctification before death, refuting the belief that the flesh must taint the spirit as an old error borrowed from pagan philosophy. He emphasizes that Jesus is the complete purifier of sin-stained souls, using the truth and the Holy Ghost as instruments. Steele provides scriptural and experimental proofs that Jesus can save from all sin, both actual and indwelling, long before death, highlighting the instantaneous and thorough nature of sanctification. He argues that holiness is attainable in this life through the promises of sanctifying grace, the commands to be holy, and the exhortations to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

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## Transcript

There is no denial that entire sanctification is necessary to admission to heaven. There is in many minds a doubt respecting the attainment of perfect purity before death. It is thought, so long as the soul and body are united, the flesh must in some degree taint the spirit. The inherent evil of matter is an old error of the Gnostics, borrowed from pagan philosophy, and early introduced into Christianity as a corrupting element. The Oriental philosophers taught that matter is uncreated and eternal, containing in it ineradicable evil; that the Creator, or Fashioner, did the best that he could with it when he shaped it into the human form; that he was not able, by any process of sublimation or refinement, to expel evil entirely from its nature, and that this inherent evil must continue to defile the soul immersed in it till death shall dissolve the loathed union. Then will the soul be in a condition to be purified, if it is curable, by drifting on rivers of fire till the stains are purged away. This is Platonism. This is the origin of the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Protestantism has shaken off the fire-purgation, but has too extensively retained the death-purgatory. After seventeen hundred years Christianity has not wholly emancipated herself from this mischievous tenet of a heathen philosophy. It is our purpose to show that there is no evil in matter or in spirit which the blood of Christ cannot cleanse, and that neither death nor penal fire, but the omnipotent Jesus, is the complete purifier of sin-stained souls, and that the only instrument he employs is the truth, and the only agent is the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier. Our proofs will be wholly scriptural and experimental. The point to be

demonstrated is this: Can Jesus save from all sin, actual and indwelling, long before death? The declaration of the angel to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins," does not explicitly declare when this salvation will be accomplished. But the implication is that he is to be a present Saviour, just as a physician advertising himself as a healer of cancers is understood to heal patients now, not in future years, nor a few hours before death. It is fortunate, yea, providential, that we have an inspired comment on this name by Zacharias when "filled with the Holy Ghost." With prophetic vision he saw the immediate advent of Jesus, of whom his son John, then eight days old, was to be the forerunner.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David.... That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our (spiritual) enemies, might serve him without fear, (and hence with perfect love,) in holiness and righteousness before him, (not fulfilling any mere human standard,) ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE." The deliverance was to be spiritual, and not an emancipation from the Roman power; and the result, a glad and holy service, was to ensue in this life. No language could be used to express such an idea more clearly than this. A still more explicit statement of the same great privilege of believers is found in St. Paul's brief prayer in 1 Thess. 5:23. He had just been enjoining duties which none but those who are fully saved could possibly perform: "Rejoice ever more. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." John Wesley says, "I know no higher Christian perfection than this." To enable them to obey these injunctions, and another just as difficult - "abstain from all appearance (every kind) of evil" -- he offers this prayer: "But may the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, soul and body, be preserved entire without blame, in the coming of the Lord Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

So intent is the great Apostle on giving an adequate and explicit expression of his meaning, entire sanctification, that he uses a strong word found nowhere else in the New Testament -- *Dioteleis*, wholly, rendered in the Vulgate *per omnia* -- "in your collective powers and parts," marking more emphatically than any ordinary New Testament word the thoroughness and pervasive nature of the holiness prayed for. Luther has very happily translated it "durch und durch," through and through. Then St. Paul has used another peculiar term, which is found in only one other place in the New Testament, in James 1:4, and gives it the position of an emphatic predicate: "May your spirit be preserved entire, your soul entire, and your body entire." He ordinarily employs the word *teleios*, "perfect," when he marks what has reached its proper end and maturity. But wishing to express a quantitative, and not qualitative, meaning, he employs a term signifying "entire in all its parts," "complete," lacking nothing. Having in these strong and remarkable words indicated the thoroughness of the sanctification, Paul leaves us in no doubt as to the time, when he adds, "and preserve you without blame in the coming of the Lord Jesus." Through what period of time is the preservation to extend? Till the second advent of Christ. This period covers the lifetime of these Thessalonians, and the space between their death and resurrection. To say that the prayer refers to the latter period is to involve St. Paul in the papal heresy of praying for the dead. Therefore the preservation which is to follow the entire sanctification can refer only to the present life up to the hour of death. So plainly is this true, that no polemical writer has ventured to twist this passage into any other meaning. The entire sanctification here supplicated is not only in this life, but the peculiar phraseology of the prayer implies that it is an instantaneous work. To the objection that the verb *agiasai*, sanctify, can here only be understood of the gradual spread of the principle of holiness implanted in regeneration; even Olshausen insists that the emphasis laid on the "very God," or "the God of peace himself," "shows that something new is to follow," some vigorous interposition of the omnipotent arm of the Sanctifier. Besides this, the verb is in the aorist tense, denoting a single momentary act.

Before taking our leave of this wonderful Scripture we call attention to the fact, that it effectually refutes the Gnostic error respecting the inherent evil of matter. In the enumeration of the constituent elements of man which are to be sanctified wholly, and preserved each entire, we find "body," soma, which is wholly material. St. Paul knew of nothing in man which was incapable of receiving the efficacy of the cleansing blood of Christ. And lest there should be any room for cavil, he specifies the phuxa, the lower or animal "soul," in which inhere those passions and desires possessed by man in common with the brutes. This border land between pure spirit on one side and gross matter on the other, lies open to the great Purifier as well as the higher element of spirit, Pneuma, the designed receptacle or temple for the abode of God in man. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle's closet door gets ajar again, and we hear these words breathed into the ear of God -- so much like those just quoted as to indicate the same pleader: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,<sup>2</sup> that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work to do his will." This must be before death, for good works must be in time. To be perfect in them is to exclude every evil work, that is, all sin.

2. Every Scripture in which we are exhorted to bring forth those virtues and graces called the fruit of the Spirit, must refer to this life. If these are required in perfection, as they certainly are, they must exclude their opposites. Perfect love supposes the extirpation of every antagonistic affection; perfect meekness, all unholy anger; and thus with all the other graces.

3. We argue again, that entire holiness is attainable in this life, because all the commands to be holy must refer to the present. Grammarians tell us that all imperatives are in the present tense. If they cover the future they include the indivisible now. "Be ye holy," plainly requires present holiness. "Be ye perfect," enjoins perfection today. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart," is a command enforcing perfect love today, if it means anything.

4. The promises of sanctifying grace are available to believers now, or they are worthless. For true faith can be exercised for spiritual grace for ourselves only as it rests on the promise which includes the present moment. "Knowing this, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." This promise of the destruction of sin begins now, and is followed by a glorious henceforth of emancipation this side of death. Let the reader study the following promises, and observe how manifestly they imply present fulfillment: Isa. 1:18, 25; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:9; 4:16-18. Let him also remember that every command to be holy covers the present, and contains an implied promise of the aid of the Sanctifier.

5. It remains to examine one Scripture in which it is asserted that our evangelical perfection is in express terms deferred to some future time, namely, 1 Peter 5:10: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Some tell us that the adverbial clause, "after ye have suffered a while," modifies the following verb, "perfect." Let us read it this way, and we will find that the poor souls for whom Peter prays cannot claim to be "stablished" now, nor strengthened now, nor settled now; but they must be tossed about in weakness and instability till after they have "suffered awhile." This is certainly contrary to the uniform promise of God to help in time of need. We need the most help when we suffer. Then again, the soul deserted of God for a while is anxious to know the length of this indefinite "a while." How long a time must elapse before I can claim by faith the strengthening grace here supplicated? It is evident that the four verbs "perfect," "stablish," "strengthen," and "settle," are all in the same grammatical construction. If we must wait a while to be perfected, we must also wait in suffering to be strengthened. But now suppose that, with the best biblical scholar of the century, Dean Alford, we attach the adverbial clause to

the verb "hath called," what will be the rendering then? "But the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory (heaven, not now, but) when ye have suffered a little while, himself perfect you (now, ) stablish," etc. This rendering is simple and clear. It obviates all the difficulties of the other rendering, and makes God a present help in our extremity. The sufferings must be passed before the glory can be entered. They are the condition of the reward. This is all that St. Peter intended by the clause in dispute. As God is ready to pardon now every sinner on the earth who comes in penitence and faith in Jesus, so is this Almighty Saviour able and willing, at the present moment, to cleanse and endow with the fullness of the Holy Spirit every believer who honors Christ by a trust in his promise of the abiding Comforter. So intense is his abhorrence of sin that he longs to wipe out the last spot that defiles humanity.

6. The experimental evidence that the blood of Christ avails to the complete cleansing of the believer before death would fill many volumes. We give the first that comes to hand.

A few years ago the wife of a distinguished minister was lying hopelessly ill. All was mist and uncertainty before her. She longed for the purity and peace promised in the holy word, but her husband had always preached a gradual growth in grace, and completeness in Christ only at the last moment of life, and she waited for that hour in dread uncertainty.

'O that I could have complete deliverance from sin now, before that fearful hour!' she exclaimed.

'Why not now?' the Spirit suggested.

She sent for her husband, and as he entered her sick-chamber, she anxiously inquired, 'Can Christ save me from all sin?'

'Yes; he's an almighty Saviour, your Saviour able to save to the uttermost.'

'When can he save me? You have often said that he saves from all sin at the dying moment. If he is almighty, don't you think he could save me a few minutes before death? It would take the sting of death away to know that I am saved.'

'Yes, I think he could.'

'Well, if he could save me a few minutes before death, don't you believe it possible for him to save a few hours or a day before death?' The husband bowed his assent. 'But,' she said with deep earnestness, 'I may live a week, or a month; do you think it possible for God to save a soul from sin so long before death?'

'Yes; all things are possible with God,' he answered with deep emotion.

'Then kneel right down here and pray for me. I want this full salvation now, and if I live a month, I will live to praise God.'

He knelt beside her bed, and poured out his soul to God in prayer as he had never done before. And while he prayed, the cleansing blood that makes whiter than snow was applied to her soul, and she was enabled to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. She lived a month afterward to magnify the grace of God, and testify of the perfect love that casteth out all fear. And since that hour her husband has preached Christ as a present Saviour, able to save from all sin.<sup>3</sup>

The following experience of a Presbyterian preacher's wife who still lives, and testifies on both continents to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ purifying her from all sin years after conversion, meets the objection urged by some that those experiencing entire sanctification are only just then converted or reclaimed from a backslidden state: --

When I was converted my conversion was so marked, so clear, so decided, that I never could have a doubt of it. I went on for three years in the ordinary Christian way, (sometimes gaining a little, perhaps, but at other times defeated,) battling against my besetting sins -- against pride and ambition, against impatience and irritability, against worrying about the future, and about the petty things of life.

But at the end of three years I was taught a very different way from that of making resolutions, and struggling into the Divine life, and battling down my ambition, and pride, and levity, and all those things which tormented me. I found that Jesus Christ would do all that work for me. After I learned this, my life was changed. O, how changed it was! How calm and serene it became! There was such a resting on Jesus! He seemed to be with me every day, and all the time; and I looked to him to keep me from pride and ambition, and from the worriments of life, and from anxiety about the future, and I found that he did that work for me. He did it all the time. He is the Conqueror of sin. If we leave ourselves in his hands he does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

A widely known deaconess, in evangelical labors most abundant, testifies to a steady growth up to the time when the love of Christ was made perfect in her heart by the fullness of the Holy Ghost: --

For years I worked and worked to get the Christian graces, and fit myself for salvation by Christ. And O, how hard that was! But then it was a great deal easier than to submit to Jesus. My heart chafed and found no rest until I was willing to accept the words of Christ when he said to me, "Your heart is deceitful and desperately wicked," and at the same time to accept his words when he said, "I will save you," and to trust in him. After that, doubts went from me, and there seemed to be a full resting in the righteousness of Christ, in his merits, in his atonement. There was no rest in myself, in my experiences, or aught else besides simply resting upon Christ to save me eternally, and accepting his promises to be with me everywhere and every day, and to guide me in all things. In this there was peace and Joy to my soul.

All that I can think of by which to illustrate my Christian life is this, that it was like sitting in a rowboat and rowing up stream, and making progress by severe effort; until, by and by, there comes a steamer along, and the weary toiler is asked if he will not have a ride, and he steps on board, and makes the remainder of the voyage easily and pleasantly. It seemed at first that the Christian work was hard and wearying, but after that it was God doing the work in me, God pushing me on, God leading me, God guiding. And now it is easy -- easy in the family, with the little ones, everywhere. For it is love the love of God that is working. The soul is filled with love. And O, how love will go anywhere, and count no cost, and keep no record of what it does! There is no burden at all about living for a loved object. It is perfect freedom."

We have not space for the clear testimonies of Madam Guyon, Catharine Adorna, Monsieur De Renty, John and Mary Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, Bramwell, Carvosso, Adam Clarke, J. B. Taylor, Wilbur Fisk, Olin, Hamline, Alfred Cookman, and a host of others, whose biographies are a precious legacy to the Christian world, and a directory to all who are seeking to find the highway of holiness.

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