

# Righteousness Unto Sanctification

by Daniel Steele

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the order of justification and sanctification, and the role of faith in receiving entire sanctification.*

**Scripture:** Acts 15:8, Romans 6:19, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 12:4, 1 Peter 1:2, Revelation 22:11

**Topics:** "Justification", "Sanctification"

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## Description

Daniel Steele preaches on the divine order of Gospel Salvation, emphasizing the precedence of righteousness leading to perfect holiness, with justification always preceding entire sanctification. He highlights the importance of seeking entire sanctification and the role of the Holy Spirit in purifying believers. Steele clarifies the distinction between justification and sanctification, refuting the idea that they are simultaneous events. He encourages believers to earnestly seek the crowning blessing of entire sanctification through unwavering faith in Christ.

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## Transcript

IN our Authorized Version it is "righteousness unto holiness," not the initial holiness of regeneration, but, as Alford says, "perfect holiness." "So now render up your members as servants to righteousness unto (leading to, having as its result, perfect) holiness."

Both versions recognize an important distinction between these words, and that there is an established order, righteousness, or a state of evangelical justification, always preceding perfect holiness, or entire sanctification. It is philosophical that righteousness, which is harmony with the divine law, should be the condition of conformity to the divine nature, which is the best definition of holiness. It is important that this distinction and this order of time should be clearly seen, since the great practical question, "Shall I seek entire sanctification?" hinges on it. It took eight years of earnest Bible-study for two young men in England, one of whom was John Wesley, to make the discovery, "that men are justified before they are sanctified." "God then," while they were still in eager pursuit of heart purity, "thrust them out to raise a holy people."

This incident in the life of the founder of Methodism would not be deemed worthy of a place on the first page of the book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church over the signature of every one of her American bishops, living and dead, if it were not for the vital truth connected with it, "that men are justified before they are sanctified," and that the great purpose of this great religious movement is to raise a holy people by spreading scriptural holiness over all lands.

A clarified theology lies at the basis of the incandescent zeal of early Methodism. As Luther cleared the doctrine of justification of the rubbish which Romanism had piled upon it, burying it out of sight of despairing millions, so Wesley cleared the doctrine of sanctification of the errors which for ages had thickly encrusted it, purification by works, by growth, by imputation, by death, and by purgatorial fires after death. He taught believers to magnify the intercessory office of our adorable risen Saviour in procuring and sending down the Holy Spirit in pentecostal power to flow through the ages a river of water, thoroughly cleansing all who will plunge therein.

He taught that this work of entire purification is by faith, "and if by faith, why not now?" Thus he denied that it is necessary to wait for death to do this work by sundering the soul from the body, erroneously accounted to be incurably poisoned by sin.

Wesley's discovery of the divine order of pardon and of purity clearly refutes the error that they are identical in time, that regeneration is entire sanctification. If there is an interval of time between the lodgment of divine love, the purifying principle in the soul, and the perfection of love through the fullness of the Holy Spirit destroying all its inward antagonisms, then "the residue theory" must be true. During this interval "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," and the Spirit strives against the flesh till He succeeds in its crucifixion.

The precedence of justification to entire sanctification is a truth that can never be harmonized with the doctrine of imputed holiness which is quite zealously proclaimed in these days, namely, that the first act of faith for ever incorporates the believer into the glorified body of Christ, so that all His holiness is imputed to him. But when is he justified? The moment he believes. This makes the two works simultaneous. There can be no interval between them, according to the imputationist, unless he assumes that all for whom Christ died were justified when God "judged sin on the Cross." This is not the justification by faith which St. Paul teaches, for how can a man believe 1800 years before he is born? If both rest upon an arbitrary decree, then justification and sanctification are simultaneous, since they are only different sides of the same decree.

There is still another error, inculcated by many Romanists and by some Protestants, that justification takes place only when sanctification is completed. This really lies at the bottom of the doctrine of purgatory which cannot consist with the truth that Christ bestows a full and perfect pardon upon every penitent believer, for purgatory is punishment.

Thus we see that our statement of the divine order in the stages of Gospel Salvation is the only theologically consistent one, and is in perfect harmony with the Holy Scriptures and with Christian experience.

The question for every believer to ask himself, in the light of the truth which we are elucidating, is this, Have I advanced from justification to entire sanctification? If I have not touched this goal, why have I failed? What is keeping me back from a state of grace so desirable? Do I honour the Holy Spirit in not earnestly seeking that crowning blessing which comes only through His agency?

Perhaps my reader is perplexed with the question. How long after justification may I receive entire cleansing?

There is no divine almanac which shows the length of the interval. As soon as you discover a further need in your heart, and believe with an unwavering, all-surrendering, and persevering faith, that Christ is the

supply of your utmost need, you may expect to grasp the prize.

We find some earnest Christians who are in doubt respecting Entire Sanctification as an instantaneous work wrought by the Holy Spirit. They say that they fail to find the Scriptural proofs of this doctrine. We would advise such to examine the whole subject again in the light of the revised New Testament, in which the Greek word, *hagiasmos*, is invariably translated by the term, sanctification, indicating the divine act, instead of the word holiness, which defines a moral state, in accordance with the law of the English language that nouns ending in 'tion' signify an act, while the ending 'ness' signifies a state. In the light of this suggestion we commend our readers to the prayerful study of the following texts:-- "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification . . . But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life" (Rom.vi.19, 22); "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor.i.30); "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication" (1 Thess.iv.3); "But we are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess.ii. 3); "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb.xii. 4); "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace be multiplied" (I Pet. i. 2).

The many texts which enjoin entire sanctification imply an instantaneous finishing stroke. Examine them with the aid of your concordance. Then study the texts which speak of the baptism of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit, expressions which also imply entire sanctification as is shown by Acts xv. 8, 9: "And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith." In this passage Peter teaches that the hearts of the apostles were cleansed on the day of Pentecost. A distinguished English scholar and Commentator on the New Testament Epistles, makes the following candid statement -- although he is not a believer in the possibility of "the annihilation of the inward tendency to sin" in the present life -- "It is worthy of notice that in the New Testament we never read expressly and unmistakably of sanctification as a gradual process, or, except, perhaps, Rev. xxii. 11, ('He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still'), of degrees and growth in holiness." Thus, according to this writer, the only gradualism in sanctification is found beyond the day of doom, and that assertion is accompanied with a "perhaps." The same writer calls attention to the fact that "only in Heb. ii. 11, x. 14 ('For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one ... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified'), is the present tense of the word sanctify used of Christian believers." Even here a gradual process is not necessarily implied." In the light of this quotation we see that modern sacred scholarship removes the burden of proof from the advocates of instantaneous sanctification to the shoulders of the gradualists. If the Greek student is still unconvinced, we recommend a study of the tenses of the verbs "to sanctify" and "to perfect" in the Greek Testament.

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