

The Evidences of Perfect Love

by Daniel Steele

The sermon discusses the evidences of perfect love, including easy victory over sin, oneness with Christ, and insatiable desire to communicate the love of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 18:2, Psalm 51:10, Matthew 28:19, John 7:38, 1 Corinthians 2:12, Philippians 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 11:1, James 4:7

Topics: "Sanctification", "Christian Living"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the fruits of the Sanctifier, highlighting the evidence of easy victory over sin, oneness with Christ, absence of apprehension of future ill, desire to share the love of Christ, increased beneficence, insight into the Scriptures, delight in Christian activities, increased humility, chronic faith, joy, power, and vivid recollection of the steps towards full salvation.

Transcript

In addition to the direct witness of the Spirit to the completeness of his work, (1 Cor. 2:12) we have the following corroborative evidences which may be appropriately styled the fruits of the Sanctifier: --

1. EASY VICTORY OVER SIN. -- In the justified state there is victory, but after intense and painful struggles. Yet sometimes, in moments of weakness, sin takes the soul so by surprise that it is brought into condemnation. Victory on hard-fought battle-fields, with occasional defeats, is the usual experience of regenerate souls. But after the fullness of Christ's love is shed abroad in the soul, temptation greatly loses its power. An invisible shield quenches the fiery dart. The soul, surrounded by the "munitions of rocks," understands what it is to be "kept by the power of God through faith." It has but to utter, "Get thee hence, Satan," and the Tempter flees in confusion.

It may take time for the entirely sanctified person to unmask Satan, to disrobe him of the angel's robe of light. Jesus had no such necessity. His omniscient eye glanced instantaneously through all disguises. But the souls of men, though they are all aglow with love to God, have no such intuitive insight into the moral character of all acts. They must fall back upon their judgments. Abstract right may be an intuition, and, at the same time, right in an act may require careful deliberation or application of the reasoning faculty. This may cause delay and anxiety to know the path of duty, but no struggle to overcome inward antagonists to perfect rectitude. Just here is a good place to explain the singular phenomenon of two perfectly sanctified persons, like Paul and Barnabas, disagreeing in their conclusions. Their judgments of what is expedient differ, while both are actuated by perfect love to God and man. The impulse toward the known right is

equally strong in both. They would die at the stake before they would swerve from the purpose of righteousness. But their original intellectual capacities, education, and circumstances, which all have an influence upon their judgment, differ so greatly that they innocently arrive at widely different conclusions. This accounts for the fact, that professors of entire sanctification are sometimes severely criticized by non-professors of this grace for doing deeds which the superior moral training of their critics would not let them do. For instance, the laws of one country may not regard as property the fruits growing wild in the field. The appropriation of such is as free to all as the sunshine and the rain. Another country may define such fruits as the property of the landowner, and punish the unlawful appropriation as theft. An emigrant from the former land to the latter, though perfectly upright in his purposes and holy of heart, might without apostasy be convicted of theft unwittingly committed. Here is the appropriate field for the charity that "thinketh no evil." It was possible by Divine grace for Abraham to obey the command, "Walk thou before me, and be perfect," while it would have been impossible, even with God's help, to walk before men and be perfect in their estimation.

2. ONENESS WITH CHRIST. -- The advocates of an advanced Christian experience insist, with great unanimity, that there is a well defined line separating it from the former Christian life. We are often called on to state the specific difference -- to draw the line between these two religious states; hence the attempts to discriminate between the new birth and entire sanctification are some of them conclusive, and others unsatisfactory. We are not whetting our theological razor to assist at this hairsplitting; we need less theorizing and more exemplification -- less dogma and more experience.

Are there men and women now on earth living the so called "higher life?" There are saints treading the earth day by day, victors over the world and sin, "dead indeed unto sin," and "free indeed" from its very indwelling. It was not so with their former Christian state. Can they tell us what is the most conspicuous line running through their consciousness, separating these experiences. The unanimous testimony is, that it is a sense of oneness with Christ, contrasting most strongly with the former feeling of duality, or twoness, if we may coin a Saxon word, instead of borrowing from the Latin. We have heard of a converted Indian who came to the missionary one day in great distress, saying, "There are two Indians inside of me -- a good and a bad." He expressed what all Christians feel in their initial spiritual life. There is a painful distraction. The secret is, that self is still alive, and disputing with Christ the throne of the soul. Self has not learned the difficult lesson of perfect and joyful submission. There is an inward schism between the spiritual and carnal forces. The prayer of the psalmist has not been offered in faith, "Unite my heart to fear thy name."

Octavius, who had been a triumvir, thought it for the interest of peace that the world should have but one ruler, and, styling himself Augustus, he became that ruler by the defeat of Mark Antony. It was found that a three-men power, or a two-men power, only provoked strife. It is certainly for your soul's peace, my dear reader, that you should henceforth have but one sovereign. The one-man power is what you need -- the God-man. Which will you have for your king? Jesus, or Barabbas or Self? Which will bring in genuine, eternal peace? The Prince of Peace. He is able to dethrone and extinguish self as a foe to his reign.

"But can I not have perfect peace under his rival?" Yes, but not till Jesus is banished from his realm, and the Holy Ghost, his representative, has withdrawn, and conscience, God's viceregent in the soul, has been dethroned. Then you would have the awful blessing of peace -- the alarming tranquility which presages the earthquake the peace of an unawaking, endless stupor. Endless? No; death will dispel it, and set the worm, remorse, to gnaw forever. Do not, my Christian friend, try this way to peace. Jesus, the great peacemaker, is in thy heart, and offers to establish your perfect peace on an eternal foundation. He wishes to rule

supreme; he has been thrust aside by self, and with sorrow has he protested against the usurpation of another, knowing the miseries to which you will be reduced. You may not be distinctly conscious of a power in you, rivaling and antagonizing the Lord Jesus; you have lived so long in the atmosphere of self that you do not recognize its presence. The hidden self will come forth from his hiding-place into the sunlight if you begin in earnest and in detail to consecrate all to Christ. You will hear a plea for this little self-indulgence, for that small interest to be untouched by King Jesus; you will find a shrinking back from giving him a full range through your whole being; he may uncover some secret idol.

That shrinking, dear reader, is self. You don't feel the shrinking now, because you are not earnestly attempting entire consecration. You are enjoying a kind of false peace. Self has sent a flag of truce to Christ, not intending an unconditional surrender, but a compromise. "Immanuel may reign over all my being, with certain trifling exceptions. I think that my sense of propriety is a little superior to his, therefore I wish to reserve the privilege of self direction in some matters wherein others, by blindly following Christ's directions, have lost the good opinion of some cultivated people, and even made themselves unpopular. Then, again, there are certain principles of commercial morality which tend more directly to wealth than the high and impracticable ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. I always deemed it unfortunate for the success of Jesus Christ's moral code that he had not worked his way up from a journeyman carpenter to a master builder, and become a millionaire by his shrewd management. He never rose in business because he was an impractical theorizer. Hence, there are some points in which his ethics have become a little obsolete: at any rate, almost every body thinks so, and there must be some good ground for their opinion; therefore. It is not prudent to submit without reservation to his will; it is not the short cut to riches nor to honors."

To the reader who has not been made perfectly one with Christ in will and desire, let me say, If you lay your ear close to the lips of Self, and listen to his soliloquy, you will find such whisperings of distrust respecting Jesus, whom you have theoretically acknowledged as "God over all, and blessed for evermore," and invited to dwell in your hearts, and exercise a general oversight over you. Alas, the number of such Christians is not small. They are the majority in nearly all our Churches. They are good and conscientious, and in the main dutiful, and are limping along toward heaven. The great defect in their experience is, that they are not completely one with Christ There are points on which they cannot trust him; he is held back from completing his own ideal in their lives, because they interfere and insist on the alteration of his plans. He does not abandon them, but continues working, sad to see his own splendid and perfect plan marred by the impertinent antagonism of Self. The consummation which he most devoutly wishes, is to see this officious intermeddler nailed to his cross. The crucifixion of Self is the painful birth of the soul to the higher life -- the life of perfect oneness with Christ. He who has entered into this rest will find the most difficult petition in the Lord's prayer -- "thy will be done" -- the easiest for the tongue to utter.

3. Hence THERE IS NO APPREHENSION OF FUTURE ILL, and there is perfect contentment with our providential circumstances. We rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks. We thank God for our disappointments, not before they come, because we do not know then that they are in the will of God. But when they are thus known, the soul which is in full trust receives them joyfully.

"Ill that He blesses is our good;

Unblessed good is ill;

And all is right which seemed most wrong,

If it be his sweet will."

4. **INSATIABLE DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO UNBELIEVERS** and to imperfect believers, with corresponding efforts to convince them of sin, and bring them to Christ. The anointed soul has full sympathy with David Brainerd, the missionary: "I long to be a flame of fire continually glowing in the divine service, preaching and building up Christ's kingdom to my latest, my dying hour." This desire springs up in the experience of pardon, but it does not become a passion inflaming all the soul like a mighty furnace, till love fills its utmost capacity. The feet of Jesus were ever hasting toward lost men. His mighty heart was ever yearning over the spiritually blind and dead. It is natural that the fullness of love to Christ should bring us into sympathy with this dominant passion of his holy soul, and that our footsteps should ever after be toward the perishing. There is a grave mistake somewhere when a person imagines that he has mounted up to the plane of the "higher life" and feels no quickened impulse toward sinners dying in their sins around him. That ecstasy of delight must be spurious which inclines its possessor to sit still and selfishly enjoy the raptures of divine love, instead of going forth to communicate and widely diffuse the joy.

5. **INCREASED BENEFICENCE, ENLARGED LIBERALITY**, inevitably follow the blessing of perfect love. The purse must be consecrated to the advancement of Christ's kingdom when the heart becomes the abode of the Sanctifier. But it must not be expected that there will be an indiscriminate outpouring of our money to all good causes. The judgment will still be exercised in determining the best channel through which our benefactions may be poured. Some may magnify the importance of Christian education, while others may deeply feel the wants and woes of the pagan world. One may reserve all his gifts for the poor, and another be inclined to schemes of Church extension. Now if this diversity of generous impulses does not find expression secretly in obedience to the directions of our Saviour, there is afforded ample occasion for misjudging one another in respect to our liberality. Hence, groundless complaints have been made against some of the holiest persons. It is not to be expected that we shall all see alike in these matters. Here is the appropriate field for that charity which "hopeth all things."

6. **AN ASTONISHING INSIGHT INTO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES** and a daily **HUNGER** for the word of life. Gospel truth ceases to be vague and shadowy. It becomes real. A mysterious power unveils its meaning, and applies it to the soul. There is a voice within which attests the objective truth. An invisible interpreter attends the reading of the sacred page and "we discover wonders in God's law." These new beauties, unfolding evermore, so commend themselves to our hearts -- they yield us so much strength and comfort -- that we are never again troubled with doubts of the inspiration of the Bible. The hungry man, when he finds bread that perfectly satisfies and nourishes him, has no difficulty with the sophistry which would prove that it was made of chaff and not of wheat. The higher life takes root in the deeper knowledge of God's word. It lives by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Its possessor becomes a homo unius libri, a man of one book. Elegant literature, though sparkling with rhetorical gems, affords no more nutriment to such a soul than the frost-work on the window satisfies the cravings of the wearied laborer. He may occasionally read Dickens or Scott, just as he may, for a few moments, look upon the beautiful tracery of the frost artist, but he feeds on the Gospel of the Son of God. The novelists and airy poets become more and more dusty on his shelves, while the Bible becomes more and more soiled and worn.

7. **THE IMPULSE TO CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES** has changed from **DUTY** to **DELIGHT**. "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Instead of dragging himself to duty, there is a free, spontaneous impulse moving him to render with gladness any possible service to his Master, not

from fear of the law, but from love to the Lawgiver. There is a point between the earth and the moon where gravitation changes. A projectile from earth, passing that point into the superior attraction of the moon, freely moves to meet it with ever increased velocity. Thus the believer, lifted by the power of the Holy Spirit out of the attraction of the world, under the stronger attraction of Christ, gravitates upward. He no longer needs a whip and spurs to urge him, but the magnetism of love draws him sweetly, yet mightily, onward toward the King in his beauty.

"Sink down, ye separating hills;

Let sin and death remove;

'Tis love that drives my chariot wheels,

And death must yield to love."

8. HUMILITY IS MARVELOUSLY INCREASED. Pride, the primal sin and last to surrender, is extinguished. Love made perfect humbles the soul to the dust. When the Comforter makes his abode in us, our language is, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies. I am dust and ashes." Yet Satan may take advantage of this very humility to tempt the soul to a more subtle, yet more baneful kind of pride -- spiritual pride. He will sooner or later suggest, "You are a peculiar favorite of heaven, few are so highly blessed, it is very proper that you should put a corresponding estimate upon yourself, You ought to prize yourself for what you really are." The presentation of such a temptation is no proof that the person does not love God with all his heart. But to yield to this suggestion is certainly to cast one down from the pinnacle of perfect love.

9. A CHRONIC FAITH. I use this word chronic to distinguish the abiding faith attending this blessing from the evanescent and spasmodic faith in lower states of experience. The one is the continuous flow of a fountain sending up its steady and copious stream, the other is the intermittent gush of the suction pump, ceasing when the force is no longer applied. In the one the divine element is predominant, in the other the human. Humanity is always inconstant. God is a changeless, perennial stream of power. It was of the continuity of this faith inwrought by the Holy Spirit poured out after Jesus should be glorified, that he spake, when, standing in the temple, he cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his inmost soul shall flow rivers of living water." All his victories, all his graces, all his activities, all his beneficences, and all his testimonies, are rivers pouring forth from this well-spring of undying faith. In the justified state faith frequently gives way to doubt, but in the state of entire sanctification doubt is permanently excluded. Hence, from the prominence of this fact, the experience is denominated by some, the full assurance of faith.

10. JOY AND POWER are usual fruits of this blessing. But the joy may be intermittent, and the degree of power may not be productive of marvelous effects in the estimation of man. Great apparent success may not attend our efforts. From some persons the fruits of their labors are wisely hidden in this life. But no loving soul is powerless in the sight of God. Measured by human standards, ministers with very little faith, and some with no grace at all, have been the apparent instruments in the promotion of great revivals; whereas the great day will disclose the secret spring of that power in the closet of some obscure, yet fully consecrated believer, whose public utterance seemed to fall powerless from a stammering tongue.

A transitory joy may exist where the heart is not fully purged. A perfectly holy soul may, from the influence of the mortal body, be at times devoid of rapturous joy. Hence, this is not an infallible evidence of entire

sanctification.

11. A VIVID RECOLLECTION OF THE SUCCESSIVE STEPS. "If your soul has passed the barrier between you and this full salvation, my dear brother, you can mark the period when your inward corruptions were a burden intolerable to be borne; when you desired deliverance from them more than any thing besides; when you resolved, in the strength of God, to seek this great salvation; when it began to appear near at hand; when you were able to consider it as present, and claim it as your own. You can recollect the revolution which then took place in the whole train of your views and feelings. How gloriously resplendent appeared the character of God, the cross of Christ, the way of holiness! How easy it was to believe, to love, to obey; how small you seemed to yourself; how worthless all your best performances; how the world receded from your view, and heaven and glory appeared to come down to earth; how you desired that this heavenly state might be the common privilege of all Christians, and how you immediately began to talk of the great things God had done for you.*

Reader, does this mirror your experience?

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