

Entire Sanctification a Necessity

by Dougan Clark

Entire sanctification is a necessary and indispensable blessing that must be received by faith, not something that can be grown into or achieved through human effort.

Scripture: John 17:17, 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:25, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches on the importance of entire sanctification, emphasizing that it is a necessary and essential experience for all Christians to seek and obtain in this life. He addresses the various attitudes towards holiness, from indifference to disbelief, and highlights the misconception that holiness can only be achieved at the moment of death. Clark stresses that entire sanctification is a gift to be obtained by faith, not by striving or merit, and that it is crucial for both entering heaven and living a fruitful Christian life on earth.

Transcript

Science is a systematic presentation of truth. Theology is the most important of all sciences. It is the science that treats of God and of man in his relation to God. It is a systematic presentation of revealed truth. As the basis of Astronomy is the universe of worlds revealed by the telescope, and as the basis of Geology is the crust of the earth, so the basis of Theology is the Divine revelation found in the Holy Scriptures. The Theology of Entire Sanctification, therefore, is a systematic presentation of the doctrine of entire sanctification as derived from the written word of God. Such a presentation we hope--with the help of the Holy Spirit, which we here and now earnestly invoke--to attempt to give in this book. May God bless the endeavor, and overrule our human weakness, to the glory of His Name. Amen.

It is a lamentable fact that there is a large class of Christians to whom the subject of entire sanctification is a matter of indifference. They hope, with or without sufficient reason, that their sins are forgiven. They propose to live moral and useful lives, and trust, again with or without sufficient reason, that they will go to heaven when they die. The subject of holiness does not interest them. They suppose themselves to be doing well enough without it.

There are others claiming to be Christians, to whom the subject is even positively distasteful. It is an offence to them. They do not want to hear it preached. They regard those who claim it as cranks. They look upon holiness meetings as being hotbeds of delusion and spiritual pride. They turn away from the

whole subject not only with indifference, but with disdain.

There are still others, and these God's children, as we may charitably believe, who do not even regard holiness as a desirable thing. They assert that it is needful and salutary to retain some sin in the heart as long as we live, in order to keep us humble. It is true that they are never able to tell how much sin it takes to have this beneficial effect, but a certain amount they are bent on having.

Another class takes the opposite view. They regard holiness as very desirable, and a very lovely thing to gaze upon and think upon, but they also regard it as quite impossible of attainment. They hope to grow towards it all the days of their lives, and to get it at the moment of death. Not sooner than the dying hour, do they believe any human being can be made holy. Not till death is separating the soul from the body can even God Himself separate sin from the soul. The whole doctrine of entire sanctification, therefore, they regard as a beautiful theory, but wholly impossible as an experience, and wholly impracticable as a life.

In general terms, we may say that carnal Christians, as described by Paul in I. Corinthians 3:1-4, are opposed to the doctrine of entire sanctification. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and the carnal mind is irreconcilably opposed to holiness. This opposition may take one of the forms already described, or, possibly, some other forms which have been overlooked, but the root of the hostility is the same in all. Wherever "our old man" has his home in a Christian's heart, there entire sanctification will be rejected.

But we must not forget that there are many exceptions. There are thousands of sincere, believing hearts in all Christian denominations, in whom inbred sin still exists, but not with the consent of the will. They are tired--very tired of the tyrant that rules them, or of the ceaseless struggles by which, with God's added and assisting grace, they are enabled to keep him under. They long for deliverance. They are hungering for full salvation, and rejoice to hear the message of entire sanctification through the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. The Lord bless all these hungering multitudes, and give them the desire of their hearts by saving them to the uttermost, and may their numbers be vastly increased, so that the banner of Christ's church may everywhere be unfurled--the banner on which is inscribed the glorious motto of Holiness to the Lord.

Now we meet all objections to the doctrine of entire sanctification-- whether in the form of indifference, or dislike, or undesirableness, or impossibility--with the simple proposition, It is necessary. If this proposition can be established, all objections, of whatever character, must fall to the ground, and the eager cry of every Christian heart must be, How can I obtain that priceless blessing which is essential to my eternal bliss, which is indispensable, and without which I shall never see the Lord?

For this is the language of the Holy Ghost in Heb. 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," and in the Revised Version, "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." This can mean nothing short of entire sanctification, or the removal of inbred sin. And, surely, it is hardly necessary to argue the question as to the indispensableness of this blessed experience, in order to gain an entrance into heaven. Everyone will admit that God Himself is a perfectly and absolutely holy Being, and He has ever told His followers in all ages, "Be ye holy for I am holy"--making His own perfect and entire holiness the sufficient reason for requiring the same quality in His people. And, although the holiness of the highest created being will always fall infinitely short of that of the Infinite God, as regards quantity, it will be the same in quality, for Jesus tells us, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," not, of course, with the unmeasurable amount of perfection which appertains to Him, but with the same kind of perfection so far as it goes. And again in Rev. 21:27, we are told that "There shall in no wise enter into it" (the heavenly city)

"anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Heaven is a holy place, and occupied with none but holy inhabitants.

But if holiness of heart is a necessity in order that we may reach the blissful abode of the glory land, when is this stupendous blessing to be obtained? It is by no means, thoughtlessly, that I write obtained and not attained. It is very generally spoken of as an attainment, and this form of expression has a tendency to discourage the seeker by magnifying the difficulty of receiving this blessing. The thought contained in the word attainment is that of something earnestly striven for, struggled after, persistently pursued with much labor and toil and effort, until, at last, the coveted prize is attained. A very few of the multitudes who went to California, soon after gold was discovered there, attained fortune; but it was after years of hard labor and privation and hardship. The majority died on the way, or while mining for the precious metal, or returned as poor as they went.

On the other hand, the idea of an obtainment is simply that of a gift. And entire sanctification is precisely a gift, "merely this and nothing more." It is not received by struggle, nor effort, nor merit of our own; it is not a great and laborious enterprise to be undertaken; not the fruit of a long journey or a perilous voyage; not by doing, nor trying, nor suffering, nor resolving, nor achieving, but by stretching out the hand of faith and taking. Praise the Lord.

And, therefore, we ask again when is this indispensable gift to be obtained? The Roman Catholic and the Restorationist answer, in purgatorial fire, or in some kind of a second probation after death. But the Holy Scriptures tell us absolutely nothing either of a purgatory or a post-mortem probation. On the contrary, they clearly teach us that our destiny for all eternity is to be determined in one probation, which is allotted to us in the present life. Let no one suppose, for a moment, that he can be made fit for heaven at any time, nor in any place, nor by any means, after he has left this mundane sphere. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

But all the Calvinistic churches by their creeds, and also a large portion of the membership of Arminian denominations, without regard to their creeds, if asked when are we to obtain entire sanctification as an essential meetness for heaven, would answer, at death. The prevailing idea on this subject, among Christian believers, seems to be as follows: First, through repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, we are converted. Our past sins are pardoned, and we are born again. After that, our sole business is to grow in grace, and by this growth to approach nearer and nearer to the standard of entire sanctification, but never even suppose that we can reach that standard until the moment of death.

Now, grace is the gift of God, and we cannot, possibly, grow in grace until we receive it. And we can never grow into grace, but grow in it after we get it. We can grow, it is true, in the grace of justification to a limited degree and for a limited time. The degree is limited because of the presence of inbred sin, which is the great, if indeed, not the only hindrance of growth. The time is limited in most cases, at least, because if the justified Christian is brought to see the need and the possibility of entire sanctification, and yet fails, as so many do, to enter into the blessing, because of unbelief, he is very prone either to backslide, in which case, of course, there will be a cessation of growth, or, like the Galatians, he will submit to the bondage of legalism, and after having begun in the Spirit, he will seek to be perfected in the flesh; in which case Paul's verdict to that beloved church was not ye are growing in grace, but, "ye are fallen from grace."

It is plain, therefore, that we can never grow into the blessing of entire sanctification. That blessing is to be received by faith, as the gift of God in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit; and when the grace has

once been obtained in this manner, then we can grow in it indefinitely and for a lifetime, possibly even for an eternity. Growth in grace is a most blessed thing in its right place, and when rightly understood and experienced, but it can never bring us to the death of the old man, nor to the experience of entire sanctification.

And as growth cannot do this, neither can death. Death is nowhere mentioned in Scripture as a sanctifier. Death can separate the soul from the body, but to separate sin from the soul is a work which God can only do. Jesus Christ is our sanctification, and the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier, and even if the work is performed in the article of death, it is still the Holy Spirit and not death that performs it. And if He can perform it in the hour and article of death, where is the hindrance to His performing it a week, a month, a year, or forty years before death--if only the conditions are fulfilled on our part. Do we say that He cannot perform it before death; then where is His omnipotence? Do we say that He will not do it before death; then where is His own holiness? In either case, we dishonor God and rob ourselves of an inestimable and indispensable blessing. God save us from such folly.

Scripture, reason and experience, therefore, all unite in the sentiment that entire sanctification is to be sought and obtained now, and if now, then it is to be obtained instantaneously, and if instantaneously and now, it follows, also, that it is to be obtained by faith, and from these premises the further conclusion is logically deducible, that we cannot make ourselves any better in order to receive it, but that we must take it as we are. And so we arrive at and adopt the pithy precept of John Wesley, "Expect it by faith--expect it as you are--expect it now."

In these remarks we have necessarily anticipated some things which belong more accurately to the next chapter; but we are not seeking so much for a perfectly methodical arrangement, as for a clear and Scriptural presentation of the subject. And we proceed to affirm now that entire sanctification is not only essential as the condition of entering heaven, but that it is also necessary for the highest results of the Christian life on earth. It is not only an indispensable blessing to die by, but, if we would fulfill our Father's will in this world, it is indispensable to live by.

But before leaving entirely the subject of growth in grace, having demonstrated, as we trust, that we can never grow into entire sanctification, we ought, perhaps, to explain what we mean by the statement that we can grow indefinitely in that precious grace after, and not before, we receive it. Entire sanctification has two sides or aspects. It has a positive side and a negative side. Its negative side is the removal of inbred sin, and is, therefore, a matter of subtraction. And herein, we may remark in passing, is a characteristic difference between entire sanctification and regeneration. The latter is a matter of addition, because it implies the impartation of a new life to the soul which has hitherto been "dead in trespasses and sins." Now in this negative aspect of entire sanctification there can be no growth. If a heart is pure it cannot be more pure. If it is free from sin it cannot be more free from sin. An empty vessel, as some one has said, cannot be more empty. There can be no increase in purity.

But the positive side of entire sanctification is perfect love, and this is a relative expression. It does not mean that all who possess it must have an equal amount of love. Perfect love to each individual is just his own heart--not some one else's heart--being filled with love. One individual may have a greater capacity of loving than another, just as he may have a greater capacity of seeing or of working. Perfect love in a child would not be perfect love in a man; and perfect love in a man would not be perfect love in an angel. And perfect love may increase in the same individual so that what is perfect love today may not be perfect love to-morrow. As we commune with God and work with Him, as we get more and more acquainted with

Christ and With the Holy Spirit, and see more of the infinite attractions of the Triune God, how is it possible that we should not love Him more and more? "There will never be a time in earth nor in Heaven," says the late Dr. Upham, "when there may not be an increase of holy love." On the positive side of entire sanctification, then, there may be and will be growth indefinitely and everlastingly. And this is the true growth in grace, about which much more could be said, but we leave it for the present, to resume our main theme of the necessity of entire sanctification in this life as well as the life to come.

We make a definite statement as follows, viz: No Christian can do all that God would have him do, nor enjoy all that God would have him enjoy in this world, without the grace of entire sanctification. In the beautiful language of metaphor the Saviour says, "I am the true Vine and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch in Me that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." And again, "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be My disciples." Now the abundant fruit requires for its production the abundant life, and these are both found in the Lord Jesus Christ. "I am come," says He, "that ye might have life (in regeneration) and that ye might have it more abundantly" (in entire sanctification). The abundant life and the abundant fruit, therefore, can only be found in connection with purity of heart.

It is doubtless true that every living branch, that is to say, every justified and regenerated believer, may and should and must, if he would retain his religion, bring forth some fruit. And it is precisely these branches that are bearing fruit, whom the Great Husbandman "purges"--sanctifies--that they may bring forth the more abundant fruit by which He Himself shall be glorified. And here we might rest our case with a Q. E. D., but another remark or two will be in place.

The late Lord Tennyson could perceive, with the genius of a poet, the intimate connection between purity and power. He puts into the mouth of Sir Galahad, one of his heroes, these beautiful words, viz:

"My strength is as the strength of ten,

Because my heart is pure."

Now one of the most common complaints among Christians of all denominations, is because of their weakness and their leanness. And yet nothing is clearer than that God has promised to make His people strong, that He has commanded them to be strong in the Lord, and that not to be strong is even blameworthy, not to say criminal in His sight. The reason, then, of our weakness and our leanness and the meagreness of our fruitage, can be nothing else than because we do not fulfill the conditions on which He promises to make us strong. One of these conditions, and an indispensable one, is that we be entirely sanctified. It is they that know their God, both in conversion and entire sanctification, both in pardon and purity, that shall "be strong and do exploits." Beloved, if you would accomplish the work that God has given you to do, and not have to regret its non-accomplishment in eternity, even if you are saved so as by fire, seek and find that which is the essential condition, and ask at once to be wholly sanctified.

And if you would have the fullness of joy, even the joy of an uttermost salvation, the peace that passeth understanding, the fellowship with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ, the sealing and anointing of the Spirit, the white stone and the new name, the abiding presence of the indwelling Comforter, then pray that the very God of Peace may here and now sanctify you wholly. Amen.

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