

Entire Sanctification as Taught by Jesus Christ

by Dougan Clark

Dougan Clark's sermon explores the biblical doctrine of entire sanctification as essential for believers to achieve holiness and perfect love in their lives.

Scripture: Matthew 5:8-48, Luke 1:35, Luke 10:41, Luke 18:22, John 12:24, John 17:17, Hebrews 7:26

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the holiness of Jesus Christ, emphasizing His sinless nature and the expectation for His followers to pursue holiness. The sermon delves into the Sermon on the Mount, highlighting the call to holiness as a privilege and duty for believers, with references to teachings that require sanctification. The sermon also explores the concept of heart purity and entire sanctification, drawing from biblical examples like the Psalms and the teachings of Jesus. It concludes with the importance of being dead to sin and self in order to attain the blessing of entire sanctification.

Transcript

Gabriel said to Mary in the annunciation, "Therefore, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Or in the Revised Version, "Wherefore, also, that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Him as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and Peter says that "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." He is called "Thy holy child Jesus." Jesus Christ, therefore, was wholly free both from sin committed and sin indwelling. He was absolutely holy in heart and holy in life, holy in word and holy in act, holy in His birth, holy in His death, holy in His resurrection, holy in His ascension, holy in His eternity. Glory be to His Holy Name.

And if the Divine Founder of the Christian Church was thus a holy man, it would, naturally, be expected that He should desire to have a holy people; and if He desire it, that He should also make provision for it; and if He both desire it and hath made provision for it, that we should find allusions to it in His teachings. In this, we are not disappointed, as we shall proceed to show.

The Sermon on the Mount contains an epitome of the public preaching of the Lord Jesus, and every sentence is pregnant with meaning. From beginning to end, it inculcates holiness as the privilege and duty of believers. Many things are enjoined which would only be possible to those who are sanctified wholly, such as, "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, love your enemies, resist not evil," and many others.

The teachings of our Lord are like the headings of chapters, which are filled out and developed in the writings of the apostles. This is remarkably true of the Sermon on the Mount, which, without going largely into details, sets forth the principles which are to govern His kingdom on earth. The application and interpretation of these principles, He leaves to the inspired apostles and evangelists, who continued to teach and preach after His departure, and to the Holy Spirit who is promised to the believing church as its guide, teacher and comforter until Christ Himself shall come again.

But besides many precepts and injunctions which imply holiness, there are several, also, which expressly require it. Among the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon, we find this striking statement: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Now, heart purity cannot exist while there is any sin in the heart. Wherever there is sin in the heart, whether actual or indwelling, there is also defilement; and purity and defilement are incompatible terms.

Heart purity, therefore, is identical with entire sanctification, and heart purity is not only a great energizer, so that a man is powerful for good in proportion to the purity of his heart and life, but it is also a great illuminator, so that it enables its possessor to see God. This, of course, does not imply an open or an outward vision, but a spiritual apprehension of God, whereby we are brought into fellowship and communion with Him, and in a spiritual sense, we maybe truly regarded as seeing Him who is forever invisible to outward sense.

This inward purity, as distinguished from a blameless outward walk, was by no means unknown to the Old Testament writers. In the Twenty-fourth Psalm, David asks the question "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?" And He immediately answers it by saying, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." The clean hands imply that his works are in accordance with God's law; in other words, that his outward life is free from condemnation. But the "pure heart" means more than this, and suggests what the same royal Psalmist remarks again in the Fifty-first Psalm. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, in the hidden part, Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." It is also noticeable in the Twenty-fourth Psalm, as already quoted, that the clean hands or justification comes before the pure heart or entire sanctification. So accurate is the blessed spiritual logic of the Holy Ghost.

Returning to the Sermon on the Mount, we find at the end of Matthew fifth the direct command, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," or if we take the Revised Version, which is more accurate in translation, the command becomes a positive assertion, which is equally forcible. "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

But whether command or declaration, it is at first sight simply astounding. It is overwhelming. So much so, indeed, that our poor human spirits shrink back in amazement, and we are ready to say, This is wholly impossible. Surely, Jesus cannot mean what He says. Or if He does, then my case is hopeless. But let us examine the words a little more carefully.

In the first place, we are to notice that He does not say that we are to be equal in perfection to our Father in Heaven. That would, indeed, be too absurd for the wildest fancy to conceive. God is infinite in all His attributes and, therefore, infinite in perfection, and this in all directions. We are poor, finite, sinful human beings, and can never even approach the boundless perfection of Him who is wholly without limit, either as to power, space or duration, or righteousness, justice and holiness.

But the command is not, Be ye equal to your Heavenly Father in perfection, but, Be ye perfect with the same kind of perfection which appertains to Him. It may be similar in kind whilst falling infinitely short of

His perfection in degree. Now, God is infinite and perfect in all His attributes, but apart from His attributes is His essence. And what is the perfection which is predicated of the essence of God? Or, rather, what is His essence itself? It is love. "God is love," says the apostle. "Thy nature and Thy name is love," says the great hymnologist, Charles Wesley. The essential perfection of the Godhead, therefore, is a perfection of love. And we are assured by the beloved John that it is possible for us, also, to be made perfect in love, and to possess the perfect love which casteth out fear. Hence, if we are perfect in love we are perfect even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect. Behold the blessed simplicity of the gospel.

The context of the command referred to proves the same thing. Jesus had just been telling His disciples that it is not sufficient for them to love their friends, and do good to those that do good to them. All these things and more are done even by worldly minded people and open sinners. Unsaved people love those who love them. But Jesus continues, "I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Why? "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven," for that is just the way He does. He does not wait for a man to be His friend before He loves him and shows kindness to him. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And, if we are to be the children of such a Father, we must adopt His sentiments and love in our measure as He loves. His essence being love, all His infinite activities are controlled and regulated and directed by love, and when there is nothing contrary to love in our hearts, so that all our finite activities are in like manner impelled and swayed and directed by love, then we are perfect in love, and perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Glory to His Name.

I believe that if we search carefully and prayerfully we shall find the doctrine of entire sanctification in many of the parables of our Saviour. Take, for instance, the parable of the sower. Here we are expressly told that the seed is the word of God, and, of course, the sowers are all ministers and Christian workers who are trying in any right way, to diffuse a knowledge and acceptance of gospel truth. They are devoting themselves to the salvation of human souls. Now, mark the difference as to the ground upon which the good seed falls. (1) The wayside hearers are not concerted at all. (2) The stony ground hearers are converted but not established. Their shallowness is such as to prevent them from withstanding trial and temptation and hence they fall into backsliding. (3) The thorny ground hearers are converted, but inbred sin remains in their hearts in form of the love of riches, whether these riches are possessed or only desired, or too much care and cumber, having so much regard to the secular as to neglect the spiritual, or in the form of unsanctified desire, "the lusts of other things," and so by sin that dwelleth in them the word is "choked," and though they may bring forth a little meagre fruit of inferior quality, yet they bring "no fruit to perfection." They are justified but not sanctified wholly.

Now, our Heavenly Father desires not a little fruit but much fruit. "Every branch that bringeth forth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." To purge is to purify or, in a spiritual sense, to sanctify, and this is the condition of abundant fruitage. When the thorns are removed the good seed will grow and flourish. When inbred sin is taken out of the heart the Christian believer will bring forth fruit to perfection, even the perfection of love, and this will be the "much fruit" whereby God is glorified.

On one occasion we are told that a lawyer asked Jesus "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and when asked in reply what were the words of the Mosaic law he answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus commended his answer and added "This do and thou shalt live." Hence, our Saviour teaches that holiness consists of nothing more nor less nor else than perfect love to God and man. What constitutes this love has been

already explained.

Martha was a good Christian, but she was "careful and troubled about many things." Mary was a good Christian and still earnestly seeking the one thing needful, which is full salvation, or holiness of heart and life. Even good Christians may be "cumbered about much serving," and so miss this one thing needful. We cannot doubt that both the sisters, who vividly typify the two experiences, obtained the blessing of holiness when the pentecostal baptism was poured out upon the church of the hundred and twenty, if not before. In the marvelous intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus, given in the seventeenth of John, we find these expressions, "Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy word is truth." And again, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified through the truth." Here we discover the two senses of the word sanctify. Jesus sets Himself apart or consecrates Himself to the work of human redemption in order that His followers, in all ages, may be not only set apart or consecrated, but also sanctified wholly, or made holy in heart and life. He gave Himself for the world of sinners lost, that they might be forgiven and saved. He gave Himself for the church, on the other hand, that He might "sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Thus, the atoning sacrifice of Christ procured pardon and acceptance for the penitent sinner. It procured not less, certainly, entire sanctification for the consecrated believer. And it is only by accepting Him as a perfect Saviour that He "is made of God unto us, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

For the blessed Saviour does not leave us in doubt as to the method of obtaining this great blessing of holiness, nor as to the price, which must be paid for it. Entire sanctification is "one pearl of great price," and he who would possess it must go and sell all that he has. The rich young ruler had a first-class record as to morality and the outward observance of the law of God, yet Jesus said to him, "One thing thou lackest," and that one thing was perfect love, for He added, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor," and then interjecting a promise, "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come take up the cross and follow Me." The price was too great, and the young man went away sorrowful. Alas! Myriads of souls since have found the price too great, and by refusing to pay it, have deprived themselves of unspeakable blessing. Christ would not have us become His followers without counting the cost, and the cost is all that we have and all that we are. "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

First, we are to forsake, with full purpose of heart, all known sin. It may be the sin which "easily besets," our own bosom sin, near as a right eye or a right hand, but if it causes us to stumble, it must be relentlessly sacrificed. And even if the sacrifice seems like crippling and maiming us, yet Jesus assures us that it is better to enter into eternal life with one eye or one hand, than to be consigned to everlasting death with two eyes or two hands. In the first place, therefore, we are to "reckon ourselves dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

But we are to become dead, indeed, not only to all sin, but we must be dead, also, even to lawful things, except as God in His mercy may grant them to us, to have and enjoy in moderation and to His glory. Jesus teaches us that our highest affection, our deepest love must be fastened upon Him alone, and that if any individual love, father or mother, son or daughter, wife or husband more than Him, such a one is not worthy of Him. We are to love His gifts and thank Him for them, but still more are we to love the Giver Himself.

And when we love Him supremely, we shall learn to be satisfied with Himself, and what He in His love and mercy chooses to give us. If He permits us to have an abundance of earthly goods, we shall thank Him and use them as stewards of His for His glory. If He allows our family circle to be invaded by death, and one dear one after another is carried away to the tomb, or if He permits our wealth to be taken from us and consign us to poverty and desolation, if His gifts one by one or altogether are withdrawn from us, why, praise the Lord, we still have the Giver, and can still say with Job "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

It thus appears that the teachings of our Lord require us to be dead to sin, and dead to self, yea, even to lawful self, in order that we may possess this inestimable blessing of entire sanctification. Let us not hesitate, then, beloved, to lay down our lives. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it."

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

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