

Entire Sanctification in Patriarchal Times

by Dougan Clark

The sermon explores the concept of entire sanctification as demonstrated by patriarchs in the Bible, emphasizing their holiness and the implications for modern believers.

Scripture: Genesis 5:24, Genesis 6:9, Genesis 12:1, Genesis 32:24, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 5:1, Hebrews 7:1-13, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Old Testament"

Description

Dougan Clark delves into the progressive revelation of God's plan for holiness throughout the early patriarchal times, highlighting key figures like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob who walked with God and pleased Him. The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God, experiencing conversion, and seeking a deeper work of sanctification, drawing parallels between the Old Testament patriarchs and the New Testament teachings on holiness. The narrative explores the significance of Melchizedek as a type of Christ in his priestly and kingly roles, shedding light on the eternal priesthood of Jesus and the priesthood of all believers through union with Him.

Transcript

For the first twenty-five centuries after the creation of man, he was without a written law. So far, at least, as the descendants of Seth are concerned, the government, during those early times, seems to have been patriarchal. The father of a family retained his authority over his children and his children's children so long as he lived, and when he died, the branch families did not separate, but continued their allegiance to some other patriarch, usually the eldest son of the former. A number of families under their respective patriarchs constituted a tribe, and from the family patriarchs was selected a prince for the whole tribe. Among the antediluvian patriarchs were Adam, Seth, Enoch and Noah. Those after the flood were Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and each of the twelve sons of Jacob. After Jacob's death, it is most likely that Joseph acted, in some sense, as the prince of the tribe during his lifetime. Then came slavery and oppression and deliverance through Moses, and the giving of the law.

As God's revelation to man has been progressive, first just a few faint streaks of light that usher in the dawn, then broad daylight and sunrise, and finally the meridian splendor of the noontide, we are not to expect, in these early times, the full and distinct teaching on the subject of holiness, which we find in the Mosaic law, in the writings of the prophets, and especially and super-eminently in the New Testament. The word holy does not occur in the book of Genesis, and the word sanctify is found only once, where Jehovah

blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

And yet there are, even in these patriarchal times, several narratives of extreme interest, which give us glimpses, at least, of the purpose of God that His people should be holy, and we even find intimations of His method of sanctification, by conferring it as a second experience upon His already saved children, as is so clearly revealed in the New Testament.

"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Such is the record in Genesis, but when we turn to the eleventh of Hebrews, the faith chapter, we find that "by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him, for; before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God." Now, if Enoch, even amid the wickedness of antediluvian ages, walked with God and pleased God, and was translated that he should not see death, there surely can be no reasonable doubt that he was a holy man, an entirely sanctified man, and hence one whose sins had been washed away in the blood of the lamb, that was "slain from the foundation of the world."

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God." The prophet Amos exclaims most pertinently, "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" It is certain, therefore, that God and Noah were agreed, but God, who is infinitely pure and holy, can never be agreed with any person or anything that is unholy. Hence, whatever may be the proper signification of the word perfect, as applied to God's children in Old Testament times, we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that Noah was a holy man, an entirely sanctified man, and this notwithstanding his subsequent error in regard to drinking too much wine, of whose ill effects we may, charitably, suppose he may have been, up to the time of this sad experience, ignorant.

Abraham dwelt with his father, Terah, who was an idolater, in Ur of the Chaldees, when he received the call of God to go entirely away from his kindred and his father's house, and depart into a land of separation, a land which the Lord would show him. He obeyed the call, and this typifies conversion. He went out not knowing whither he went, but only knowing that the Lord was leading him. At his first move, he was accompanied by his father. And he came out of his native land, it is true, but not yet into the promised land. "He came to Haran and dwelt there," or to give the record in full, "And Terah took Abraham, his son, and Lot, the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai, his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there."

Continuing the account in his dying oration, the martyr Stephen says, "And from thence when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell," but in Genesis the statement is, "And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." The last tie of nature was sundered when the old man died, and then Abram took the second step, which brought him into the promised land. There are two distinct stages in his experience before he reached the place, which God designed him to occupy. And these we may as well regard as typical, if nothing more, of the first experience under the gospel--that of regeneration--and of the second experience as well, which is entire sanctification.

In the history of Abraham, a very beautiful and mysterious episode occurs, and that is the story of his transient but highly important meeting with Melchizedek, after his successful expedition against the kings, who had despoiled Sodom and carried away his nephew, Lot. The sacred narrative is as follows, viz.:

"And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he gave him tithes of all." No other mention is made of Melchizedek until David writes the 110th Psalm, and this was nearly one thousand years after Abraham. The Psalmist writing by inspiration, and alluding beyond all reasonable doubt to the Messiah, says, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." And then, again, the inspired record drops Melchizedek out of sight, as it were, for another thousand years, and then once more brings him to the front in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he is described in glowing language as "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that, also, King of Salem, which is king of peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy (R. V.) having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the son of God, abideth a priest continually."

Comparing, then, the different allusions to this most remarkable personage, the following inferences seem fairly deducible therefrom: (1) Melchizedek, being made like unto the Son of God, is preeminently the Old Testament type of the Lord Jesus Christ in his kingly and priestly offices. Both Melchizedek and Christ are priests, and yet the former is not of the chosen family. He is a Canaanite. He is, unquestionably, greater than Abraham. Of his origin, his ancestry and his descendants, we have no account. He brought forth bread and wine. So did his antitype at the Last Supper. The priesthood of Melchizedek was before that of Aaron. Aaron was a Levite, and Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham, his ancestor. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews argues most conclusively that since Melchizedek was without beginning or end, and greater than Abraham, and with a priesthood that existed centuries before the Levitical priesthood was instituted, therefore Christ, his great antitype, who is from everlasting to everlasting, and who hath an unchangeable priesthood, is to abolish the Aaronic priesthood, whose institution was for a temporary purpose, and was fulfilled when Christ came, who was a priest not after the order of Aaron because He belonged to another tribe, but a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

But Melchizedek was not only a priest, he was also a king. And it was not only in his everlasting priesthood, but in his regal office also, that he was a type of the Messiah. David was a prophet and a king, Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest, Jesus, only, combined in His own person the three offices of prophet, priest and king.

Now, if Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God, if he was greater than Abraham, if he was a type of Jesus Christ in His kingly and priestly offices, it is impossible not to regard him as a holy man. He was cleansed from all sin. He was sanctified wholly. He was made like unto the Son of God, and the Son of God is eternally holy. Praise His name. It is, surely, cause of devout thankfulness, that even in those primitive and patriarchal times, when the earth was full of wickedness and violence, that even then God had His witnesses to experimental and practical holiness.

Before leaving this point of the eternal priesthood of Christ, let me remark that it was a sad day for His Church when the idea became prevalent, that ministers of the gospel are in any official sense to be regarded as priests. This serious error may have been derived, in part, from Judaism and, in part, from paganism. It has become incorporated in the creed of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Greek Church as well, and has been productive of the most disastrous results. Among the deliverances of the Council of Trent, held at intervals from 1545 to 1564, and the last Council, which Romish authorities regard as of binding authority, are the following sentences, quoted by the late A. A. Hodge, in his Outlines of Theology: "Whereas, therefore, in the New Testament, the Catholic Church has received, from the institution of

Christ, the holy, visible sacrifice of the Eucharist; it must needs, also, be confessed that there is, in that church, a new, visible and external priesthood, into which the old has been translated. And the sacred Scriptures show, and the traditions of the Catholic Church have always taught, that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord, our Saviour, and that to the apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, was the power delivered of consecrating, offering and administering his body and blood, as, also, of forgiving and retaining sins."

It is to be feared that not all Protestants are entirely clear of this same idea of the priesthood of the ministry, and that, in thought, at least, many substitute this for the true priesthood, which appertains to all believers. Now, the office of a priest is to stand between God and man. He mediates, and this Jesus did both by propitiation and continues to do, forever, by intercession. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." He "offered one sacrifice for sins forever." If He has an unchangeable priesthood, and has already offered Himself as a sacrifice, sufficient for the sins of all mankind, the benefits of which each and every one may obtain on the simple condition of repentance and faith, what possible need can there be of any human priesthood to come between God and the sinner? Says George Fox, "Friends, let nothing come between your souls and God, but Christ," and we say Amen.

To sum up on this particular point, we may say that the ancient priesthood, both of Melchizedek, the Gentile, and of Aaron, the Jew, with his descendants, were nothing more than types; and a type can have no real existence after the antitype has come. Therefore, there is no place for a human priesthood under the Christian dispensation. We are taught in Holy Scripture that no one can come to God except through Christ, but we are also taught that all are invited, and all may come directly to Him. All the officers belonging to the New Testament Church, whether ministers, deacons, presbyters, bishops, elders, or even apostles, are described not as priests but "messengers, watchmen, heralds of salvation, teachers, rulers, overseers and shepherds." Their function is to preach the word, to teach, to rule, but never to mediate. It is clear, therefore, that ministers as such are not priests.

But we must not forget that, in a very important sense, all Christians are priests. But this is through Christ and in Christ, the one great and eternal High Priest. They are priests because they are in Christ. And not only priests, but kings as well. And not only kings and priests, but prophets as well. All these blessed privileges are theirs, solely by virtue of their union and fellowship with Christ, who, in a mystical and spiritual sense, makes them to be partakers of His own priesthood, His own royalty, and His own prophetic office.

Thus we hear Peter exclaiming, under the inspiration of the Spirit, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."

And again: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Precisely. If we are priests, we must perform the functions of a priest, and one of these functions is the offering of sacrifice. What, then, are the sacrifices which are to be offered by the Christian Priest? Certainly, not any expiatory or meritorious sacrifices. These are, forever, precluded by the fact that Christ hath offered one sacrifice for sins forever. Nothing can be added to, and nothing can be subtracted from, that infinite and all-sufficient offering.

The first sacrifice to be made by the Christian priest is the surrender of his own body, with all its appetites, organs and capabilities, to God. Listen to Paul.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Your bodies, because if you are Christians, you have already presented your hearts; your bodies, because through the body, too often temptation enters into the soul and leads it to actual sin. Your bodies, because of their wonderful mechanism and their equally wonderful activities. If surrendered to the Lord, He makes them the very thing they were originally designed to be, namely, the obedient servants of the soul, and the soul is already His own obedient servant, so that when the soul commands and the body obeys, both are working for God, and when the soul says Go, and the body runs hither and thither, both are going upon God's errands.

It will be observed that the body is to be presented a living sacrifice, not a dead one. All its boundless activities are to be given up to God. The expression, no doubt, implies that the whole man, described by the apostle, with his inspired trichotomy, as spirit, soul and body are to be consecrated unto God, to be His, and His forever, and henceforth to be ready to be, to do, and to suffer all His blessed will.

The command is yield yourselves, not a certain portion of your time, nor a certain portion of your money, nor a certain portion of your effort, nor your sins, nor your depraved appetites, nor your forbidden indulgences. You cannot consecrate your alcohol, nor your tobacco, nor your opium, nor your card-playing, nor your dancing, nor your theatre-going to God. He wants none of these things. All actual and known sins must be abandoned at conversion. Consecration is for a subsequent and a deeper work. None but a Christian believer can thus present his body unto the Lord. Sinners may repent, but Christians are enjoined to "yield themselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead; "not as those who are "dead in trespasses and sins." Whatever surrender the sinner may and must make in order to be saved, the believer must make a deeper, fuller, more complete surrender, of a different character and for a different purpose. That purpose is that he may be wholly sanctified, filled with the Spirit, and used to the utmost extent of his capacity for the glory of God. Consecration means yielding yourselves unto God. When you yield yourself you yield everything else. All the details are included in the one surrender of yourself.

And remember, also, that your consecration is not to God's service, not to His work, not to a life of obedience and sacrifice, not to the church, not to the Christian Endeavor, not to the Epworth League, not to any organization, not to the cause of God; it is to God Himself. "Yield yourselves unto God." It is, therefore, a personal transaction between a personal human being and a personal God. Your work, your obedience, your sacrifice, your right place and your allotted duty, will all follow in due time. The next sacrifice to be made by the Christian priest, is that of testimony and thanksgiving. "By Him, therefore," says the author of the Hebrews, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."

And the next priestly offering of the Christian is a holy life, for the inspired author goes on in the next verse, "But to do good, and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Offer, then, beloved, the body, with the soul and spirit; offer the fruit of the lips and offer the fruit of the life, and you will walk worthily of your priesthood. Glory!

The patriarch Jacob had two distinct and well-defined experiences about twenty years apart. The first of these was at Bethel, when, in loneliness and anguish of mind, he was plodding on his way toward Mesopotamia to escape the vengeance of his brother Esau. This vengeance was not causeless, and Jacob lay down upon the ground with a stone for a pillow, not only distressed in mind from fear and anxiety, but also, we may well suppose, not altogether free from the condemnation of a guilty conscience.

But Jacob was a man who had faith in God's promises, even if he did not always obey His commands. And when he lay down to sleep under the open sky, in a state of mind, sad, forlorn, fearful and contrite, God was watching over him, and when he awoke from the wondrous vision there vouchsafed to him, he perceived that God was in the place, and he found that he himself, also, was a new man. Now he could not only believe intellectually what God had said, but he could and did enter into covenant with Him, taking Jehovah for his God, and vowing the tenth of his income to be given to Him. This was such a change of mind and heart as constituted a real conversion.

When, after the many mercies and many trials that fell to his portion whilst dwelling with his uncle Laban, and after the lapse of two score years, he was returning to his father's house, no longer poor and lonely, but with flocks and herds and wives and children, again he was encountered by the fear of his brother Esau who was approaching him with four hundred men. Then it was that there "wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Note it was the man wrestling with Jacob--and the man was the angel,--- Jehovah, the pre-existent Christ-- and the object of his wrestling was to get the Jacob nature, the old man, the body of sin, out of Jacob. But Jacob resisted, until by a touch the Divine wrestler made it impossible for him to resist any longer. Now he had to cease his wrestling but he could still cling, and he could still cry, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." Jacob's will was now firmly set upon the blessing; he could no longer resist the will of the Blessor, but one thing more he had to do, and that was to tell his name. I am Jacob--supplanter, sinner, and then He blessed him there; Jabbok means extinguishment, and Jacob's self-life was extinguished there. He told his name, and in the telling lost it. No longer the supplanter--but Israel, the prince, the prevailer, the overcomer, and Israel was now a wholly sanctified man. Beloved, tell God your name--sinner--seek with fixed determination for the blessing of holiness, fulfill the conditions, and you also shall prevail, and your name will be changed from sinner to saint, priest, prophet, king, having the blessing of entire sanctification, and the Blessor Himself in the person of the Indwelling Comforter. Praise the Lord!

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