

Entire Sanctification in Prophecy

by Dougan Clark

Entire sanctification is the experience of being cleansed from all sin and being made holy in heart and life through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah 6:1, Ezekiel 36:25, Hosea 2:16, Joel 2:28, Malachi 3:3

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches on the Major Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, highlighting their prophecies about believers' sanctification in the gospel era under the reign of Christ. Isaiah's call to prophetic office and vision of the pre-existent Christ in chapter six symbolize the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Isaiah emphasizes repentance, faith, and trusting in God's mercy for salvation. Ezekiel's prophecy in chapter 36 speaks of cleansing from sin and receiving a new heart and spirit through the Holy Spirit, pointing to justification and sanctification. The Minor Prophets also allude to holiness, with Hosea symbolizing the intimate relationship between believers and God as a marriage union, and Joel prophesying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for purification and empowerment in service.

Transcript

The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The twelve prophetic books in the Old Testament following the book of Daniel are called the Minor Prophets. In the writings of both classes we find many allusions and predictions as to the entire sanctification of believers in the gospel dispensation and under the reign of Messiah or Christ.

The sixth chapter of Isaiah is usually regarded as his call to the prophetic office. Whether this be so or not, it records a very wonderful experience of that grand man, and a remarkable type of the baptism with the Holy Ghost as described in the book of Acts.

It is quite evident that Isaiah was a converted man before he wrote his first chapter. In that he laments the sins of the Israelites and the Jews, all of them God's chosen people, though now divided into the two kingdoms and these often at variance, shows the utter futility of their own efforts to regain the favor of God, by observances and sacrifices and ceremonies, and then tells them how to be converted as plainly as any gospel minister in our own day would be able to do. He shows them that the way of salvation is by repentance and faith, and by trusting to the unmerited mercy of God. Hear him: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason

together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Here are repentance and amendment of life and pardon, the washing away of guilt and committed sins, symbolical of the New Testament washing of regeneration, symbolical also of John's baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins.

But now in the sixth chapter, and "in the year that king Uzziah died," a wondrous vision of the pre-existent Christ, "sitting upon a throne high and lifted up" and the seraphim crying one to another "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," was vouchsafed to the prophet. And the first effect of the glorious things which he saw and heard was not to exalt him and minister to his pride, but to fill him with despair at his own depravity. He felt just as Peter did at the first miraculous draught of fishes on the Sea of Galilee, when he exclaimed "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Ah! beloved, it never fosters spiritual pride, nor any other kind of pride to get a nearer and clearer view of Christ than we ever had before. Quite the contrary. Such a vision turns us towards our inner selves, and enables us to behold by contrast the darkness and sinfulness and pollution of our own souls, and in such a view we shall find food for the deepest humiliation, but nothing to nourish pride.

Accordingly, Isaiah exclaimed in agony of soul "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." If we may credit Jewish tradition, it was for the offence of saying that he had seen the King, the Lord of hosts, that the prophet was afterwards sawn asunder. But the record of the glorious vision is still preserved and will, no doubt, be blessed to millions of readers in the future, as in the past, and until the end of the age.

But the seraph was sent to touch the "unclean lips" of Isaiah--unclean because of innate depravity, and unclean notwithstanding he had probably been preaching repentance and amendment of life and forgiveness for two or three years before this wondrous experience--to touch them with holy fire. And then he was assured not that his sins of commission and omission were forgiven--that had been done before---but that his iniquity was taken away, and his (inbred) sin purged. This was a second and a definite experience, and strikingly emblematic of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire under the gospel dispensation, which is also accompanied by "the purifying of the heart by faith," or entire sanctification.

How wondrous are the prophecies of Isaiah after this experience. He seems to look down the centuries for seven hundred years and to see the glorious blessings of the gospel dispensation almost as clearly as if they were already present. Hear him in the thirty-fifth chapter: "And an highway shall be there and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." And in the fifty-first chapter: "Awake, awake! Put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth, there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean," and in the sixtieth chapter: "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

To Jeremiah the Lord said, "I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," which must mean not only that he was set apart for the office of a prophet, but also that he was cleansed from inbred sin, as a necessary preparation for the office itself.

In the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel we have some striking passages on the theme before us. These were, no doubt, addressed primarily to the outward Israel, but they may very justly be appropriated by the Israel of God, the Church of Christ, since as Augustine says, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New."

In the twenty-fifth verse we have the promise of pardon or justification with cleansing from the pollution of their past sins: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Committed sin implies both guilt and pollution. And the pollution that is thus acquired by the practice of sinning is removed in regeneration. Thus the new convert is brought back again to the state of the little child. "Except ye be converted," said the blessed Saviour, "and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The little child has neither the guilt nor the pollution of committed sin; whilst he does have within him the inherited or inbred sin of his nature.

Now in the promise quoted above, allusion is made to the clean water made from the ashes of a red heifer and sprinkled, under the Mosaic law, upon those who had incurred ceremonial uncleanness. The thing signified, however, is the precious blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, or possibly the cleansing operation of the Holy Spirit, typified by water, may here be meant. At any rate the twenty-fifth verse points to nothing less than a full and free justification.

But the prophet continues: "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh." Here we have described certainly the experience of regeneration, if indeed not the still fuller experience of entire sanctification. But let us admit that it means only the new heart which is given to the penitent sinner at his new birth. Regeneration implies the impartation of a new life by the Divine energy of the Holy Ghost. And this new life is comparable to the "heart of flesh," not, of course, a carnal heart, but a heart tender and teachable, and impressible to heavenly influences, such a heart as we always find in the new-born babe in Christ.

But listen still further: "And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them." In this verse we have a pre-figuring of the Holy Ghost baptism, by which the heart is cleansed from all sin and sanctified wholly, and also of the subsequent "walking in the Spirit," to which Paul alludes in one of his epistles. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, who was also seized with prophetic fire at the birth of his son, exclaims, "That He would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Surely the gospel of Christ has something better for its recipients than a constant daily sinning and repenting, which is too often the experience of Christian people. The twenty-seventh verse, therefore, signifies holiness of heart and life through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

How blessed it is thus to be assured that what we cannot do by our own strength, the Holy Spirit will cause us to do. This doctrine of spiritual causation is indeed glorious. Like the mainspring of the watch which supplies the power within, by which the hands are moved without, and thus the fleeting minutes and hours are correctly measured, so the Holy Spirit within supplies the energy by which the sanctified believer is enabled or caused to adorn the doctrine of Christ, his Saviour, in all things, and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in all righteousness and goodness and truth.

In the minor prophets, we find numerous allusions to the subject of holiness, though their language is often highly figurative. In Hosea 2:16, after reproving Israel for her unfaithfulness in the past, the Almighty,

through His prophet, employs the following language, viz: "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi, and shalt call Me no more Baali," and again in the nineteenth verse, "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea I will betroth thee in righteousness and in judgment and in loving kindness and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." Now the word Ishi means my husband; while the word Baali means my Lord, and the language, therefore, points to an experience or a relation of marriage. The bride is exalted immeasurably above the servant. While the position of the servant points to a legal justification and a service for wages and reward, that of the bride must signify entire sanctification, and the closest possible union with the Heavenly Bridegroom. Again, the word betrothed points legitimately to a marriage which is always justly expected to follow if both parties are faithful to the engagement. Beloved, let us get so near to Christ that we shall not address Him as my Lord, in the spirit of a servant, but as my husband, in the spirit of a loving and faithful wife. At your conversion, you are, as it were, betrothed to Him, or in ordinary language engaged to Him. At your entire sanctification, your engagement is consummated by the marriage union. Engagement must precede marriage, it is true, but, as a rule, engagements should not be long. Do not needlessly defer your nuptials, but rather hasten to the embraces of Everlasting Love. Like Rebecca, appreciate your high and holy calling, and like her say promptly and decidedly, "I will go."

In the book of Joel we find the prophecy which Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost, and assured the multitude of Jews, out of every nation under heaven, that what they beheld on that day was the fulfillment of the same. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaidens in those days will I pour out My Spirit."

Now, these words are clearly a foreshadowing of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, designed for all of God's children without distinction of nation or sex, and intended, first, to purify their hearts by faith (see Acts 15:9) and, secondly, to endue them with power for whatever line of service God may call them to. And we may add that this text, as well as many others, shows that in these gospel days women as well as men may be, as we find in the facts of our daily experience that they are both called and qualified for the work of the ministry, as well as other labors in the vineyard of the Lord. But both men and women need the Holy Ghost baptism which consumes inbred sin, as an indispensable qualification for the highest efficiency and most marked success in the work to which they may individually be called. Every Christian may and should do something for the Lord, but none can do all for Him which he makes it his privilege and his duty to do, without the grace of entire sanctification and the fulness of the Spirit.

In the prayer of Habakkuk we have some sentences which point unmistakably to the experience of perfect trust in God and perfect love for Him. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Compare this with John Wesley's description of a holy man after Paul. One who is enabled to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks. Does not Habakkuk answer beautifully to this description?

The prophecy of Zechariah contains a number of visions, which are, no doubt, full of instruction to those who have eyes to see. We can only mention one or two of these. In the third chapter, verses one to seven, we are introduced to Joshua, the high priest, representing the Jewish people, and typifying Christ Jesus with His eternal and unchangeable priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. But the Angel Jehovah also represents Jesus in His capacity of Judge. And Satan, the adversary, is present as the accuser of the

brethren, resisting them in the person of their representative, the high priest.

And surely it would seem, at first, as if there was ground for his accusations, for Joshua, the high priest, is clothed in filthy garments, and these can signify nothing else than sins, aye, the sins of His people imputed to Him as their representative and priest, and not their actual sins only but their inbred sin also, for, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

"Many were astonished at thee," says Isaiah. "Behold the man," said Pilate, as he brought forth Jesus scourged, tortured, bleeding, but uncomplaining, and the only answer was "Crucify Him!" Thus, beloved, was He clothed in very truth with the filthy garments not of His own vileness but of ours.

But Joshua was "a brand plucked from the burning," and, therefore, in Him all His people have found pardon. And now comes the order "Take away the filthy garments from him, and unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Surely, beloved, we here have nothing less than entire sanctification, not in ourselves but in Him, and not only simply imputatively and representatively, but actually and experimentally. Praise the Lord.

The prophet Malachi assures us that "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi" (that is, the "royal priesthood" which constitutes the true church) "and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Surely no one will deny that there is holiness in prophecy.

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