

Entire Sanctification - What Is It and Can It Be Obtained in This Life?

by D.S. Warner

D.S. Warner's sermon explores the concept of entire sanctification, affirming its attainability in this life through faith and divine grace.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 John 3:3, 1 John 3:7

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Christian Perfection"

Description

D.S. Warner preaches about the attainability of holiness in this life, emphasizing that the Bible commands believers to be holy and perfect, with many attaining this state through a close union with God. He distinguishes this perfection from absolute or angelic perfection, highlighting that it does not eliminate the possibility of temptation or falling into sin. Warner explains that entire sanctification is distinct from justification, showing from the Bible that salvation from acquired and inbred depravity is a process beyond justification, leading to a life of purity and constant delight in God's service.

Transcript

Can it be attained in this life? I need but observe that the Bible commands us in the present tense to "be holy," to "be perfect," and teaches that many have attained that state. This perfection, however, is not absolute, in which sense "there is none good but one, that is God."

Neither is it angelic or Adamic perfection. It is not perfection in knowledge or judgment. Neither does it preclude the possibility of temptation and actually falling into sin. My former article undertakes to point out the scriptural meaning of perfect holiness, and I will here add that most people limit the term by their own condition. The defiled sinner can scarcely believe that entire satisfaction is attainable at all in this life. Many unsanctified believers profess holiness, but they lower its standard to admit indwelling sin, because such is their condition.

But the Bible teaches a holiness in which the whole moral nature is washed "whiter than snow," and the soul is brought into such a close union with God that his service becomes a constant delight, and almost, instinctive, and the blood of Christ keeps from all sin three hundred and sixty-five whole days in a year. Glory to Jesus forever!

"Let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

"Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 3:48).

To many these are vague sayings, but definite and real to all who can say with Paul (Gal. ii. 2), "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." All of self being dead, and all of life being Christ in us, our lives must be pure, and his all the glory.

Entire sanctification is distinct from and subsequent to justification. This I propose to prove by showing,

First. That the Bible teaches a salvation in this life from both acquired and inbred depravity.

Second. The Bible, as well as experience and observation, teaches that all this is not accomplished at the time of justification. I find the people as a general thing ready to admit that regeneration had not removed inbred depravity from their hearts, especially the more sincere and pious who more frequently "examine themselves" and try themselves by the pure word. In the past ten years' labor in the Lord's vineyard, I have never heard a single convert testify that God had wholly sanctified his or her soul. While it is perfectly natural for them to say, "The Lord has pardoned all my sins," "I have found peace with God," etc., their experience never finds utterance in the former language. Do not the best Christians, who never have experienced the second work, complain of an evil nature still within? Do not all believers in a justified state endorse these lines?

"But of all the foes we meet,

None so oft mislead our feet;

None betray us into sin,

Like the foes that dwell within."

But what says the "word!" "And every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 17:2). Here are actual branches in the vine, and yet in need of purging, i.e., cleansing. Were they made perfectly pure when they were engrafted?

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor 3:1-2).

Many will say that these had backsiden. Well, if that could be proved it would still leave the truth untouched that the Apostle recognizes the coexistence of "babes in Christ," and "carnality," for he blends both in the characters addressed. And if a person can be in Christ and yet be carnal, it is reasonable to suppose that they can be brought in with some remaining depravity. But there is no intimation that their carnality had been acquired since their conversion. On the contrary, the Apostle says, "Hitherto ye were not able," etc., i.e., up to this time. He does not say, "For ye have become carnal;" but, "For ye are yet carnal," that is,

"Ye have continued carnal to the present time."

Hence, the admonition in 2 Cor. vii. 1. Paul also admonishes the Hebrew Christians (xii. 1):

"Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

I deem it unnecessary to cite more Scripture on this point. It is a matter of universal experience that inherited "roots of bitterness" remain in the hearts of believers.

But to the second proposition. The Bible teaches a salvation from inbred sin which remains after conversion. We have already noticed that the Father purges those branches which are already in the vine and bearing fruit, and the branches' sanctification as something to be accomplished in the future; not by themselves, but by the Father, "through the truth," as the basis of their faith. Compare Acts 20:32 and 2 Cor. 7:1.

The Lord informed Paul (Acts 26:18) that he would send him to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." What for?

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

They were to receive two distinct blessings. The latter, sanctification, is called an inheritance, referring, doubtless, to Canaan as its type (Acts 20:32 and Col. 1:12).

Remember that Saints means holy ones. In Eph. 3:14-19 Paul earnestly prays that the church there might be able to comprehend with all Saints (holy ones) the boundlessness of God's love; that they might be "filled with all the fullness of God," etc. In chapter 2 we learn that they were "no more strangers and foreigners," had been "quickened," "raised up to sit together in heavenly places." And though they were fellow-citizens with the saints (sanctified or holy ones) the Apostle prays that they might receive God in the "fullness" of his love and power to save. To encourage them to seek this higher life he assures them that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that now worketh in us" (verse 20). He did not intimate that they should grow into this great blessing, but that God was able to give it to them as he had already to him.

To deny that the Ephesian church was taught to seek a second work of God's love and power in the soul is to deny the plain word. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 the apostle presents the great promises of God, that his people should be perfectly "separate" from everything "unclean," and should be "temples of the living God;" and that he would dwell and walk in them, necessarily producing a perfect walk. Then he adds (7:1), "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Perfect holiness is here defined as separation from all immunity of the flesh and spirit, i.e. every sinful power that manifests itself in unholy tempers or sinful propensities. Here is salvation from "the last remains of sin," and from the "foes that dwell within." From this text we learn that holiness in part is attained in regeneration, and is subsequently to be sought in perfection.

A very clear proof of the second work of grace can be found in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 1, applauds "their work of faith and labor of love;" and says they "were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia"--"also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." Surely this indicates a high state of grace. No reasonable mind can say that this church has backslidden. In chapter 3 we learn that Paul sent Timothy to see them, that he might "know their faith," fearing that his afflictions might have moved some of them. "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good

tidings of your faith and charity," etc., "we were comforted over you." It appears that Timothy found them all still faithful. And Paul immediately writes this letter to them in 5th chapter of which he says, "Ye are all the children of light," etc. No backsliders at all there. "Yet he desires greatly to see their faces" and "perfect that which is lacking in their faith" (iii. 10). Then he urges a growth in love, etc., and (in iv. 4) reminds them of the commandments he had given them, adding that

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor."

"Faithful is he which calleth you, who also will do it."

Do what? Just what the Apostle prayed for, of course. Do for them just what he called them unto in 3:7. Some of my dear brethren say that they were entirely sanctified when justified. If so, then experience does not harmonize with that of the Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews and Thessalonians. What can be plainer than the latter case? Who can dispute these facts, that the Thessalonians were walking in the light of justification; 2, that they were not wholly sanctified; 3, the Apostle prays that they might attain to it; 4, that God should perform the work; 5, that it was making and keeping them blameless in spirit, soul and body? Dearly beloved brethren, do not wrest these Scriptures from their plain, obvious meaning simply because you have not sought and obtained a corresponding experience. For, thank God, thousands have, and now set up their seal, that these precious words mean just what they say.

But I am often met with the objection, that "God does not do his work by piecemeal." This is true. But regeneration is a perfect and complete work of itself. The removal of inherited depravity is distinct from the former in nature as well as order. In regeneration sin is dethroned and subdued; in entire sanctification it is killed and removed. Regeneration is the "old man" bound; sanctification is the "old man" crucified and cast out.

Regeneration is sanctification commenced, and saves from the voluntary commission of sin; entire sanctification is the work completed and saved from the being of sin.

But it may be thought that if inbred sin is not destroyed at conversion, our inclination to sin would be as strong after as before. There are two things that modify the life of a believer in Christ:

1. With the pardon of our sins the corruption caused by them is also removed; that is, the purging by the blood of Christ of acquired depravity.
2. The new life, the "seed" or plant of regeneration is also then planted in the soul, which delights in the law of God. And just in proportion as this is cultivated, by using the means of grace, or neglected, will we be little or much troubled by the uprisings of remaining depravity.

But why does not the Lord remove both our sins and inherited depravity at once? Simply because the penitent does not ask God to do so. And he does not ask it because the latter forms no part of that load of guilt which perfectly engrosses his mind and prayer. God's blessings are always seasonable.

But entire sanctification would preclude further growths. This is a mistake. Perfection in quality no more suspends growth in quantity than the removal of weeds stops the growth of vegetation.

Entire sanctification perfects the conditions of a vigorous growth, because it removes all the antagonisms and obstructions to grace from the heart.

But can I not reach perfect holiness by a growth? Never. It is impossible, since it is a universal law of God that nothing changes its quality by growth. In every stage of development everything continues the same in kind. You might as well try to grow the weeds out of your corn field as depravity out of the heart. Without the slightest sense of shame, and to the glory of God, publish to the world that, in the enjoyment of clear justification I came to the altar of consecration, and, through the blood of Christ, received the blessing of sanctification. The Lord has also wonderfully saved my wife. Glory to God.

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