

Only a Methodist Doctrine

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The Methodist doctrine on entire sanctification emphasizes that God can make a person holy at any time, and it is pleasing to Him to have holy people on earth.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10:14, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin discusses the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification, emphasizing the belief that sanctification is a progressive work that begins in regeneration and is carried on by the Holy Spirit through various means like self-examination, prayer, and the Word of God. He contrasts the views of different church creeds on sanctification, highlighting the disagreement on whether holiness can be attained in this life or only after death. Baldwin challenges the idea that one must wait until death for complete sanctification, arguing that if God desires holiness in heaven, He would also desire it on earth and is capable of making believers holy in the present.

Transcript

Again it is stated that entire sanctification is a Methodist doctrine and that it is not held by other churches.

We will first give a few quotations from church creeds. Such statements from creeds and admitted authorities could be multiplied indefinitely.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647. Chapter 13. Article on Sanctification.

I. They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

III. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The New Hampshire Baptist confession, 1883.

Of Sanctification. We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

Confession of the Free Will Baptists, 1834-1868.

Sanctification is a work of God's grace, by which the soul is cleansed from all sin, and wholly consecrated to Christ; it commences at regeneration, and the Christian can and should abide in this state to the end of life, constantly growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Confession of the Society of Friends, 1675. Eighth Proposition.

Concerning Perfection. In whom this holy and pure birth is fully brought forth the body of death and sin comes to be sanctified and removed, and their hearts united and subjected into the truth, so as not to obey any suggestion or temptation of the evil one, but to be free from actual sinning and transgressing of the law of God, and in that respect perfect.

The German United Brethren Church says:

By perfect holiness we understand the separation and the purification from all inhering sin, after regeneration, by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the filling of the heart with the love of God by the Holy Ghost.

I think all will agree in the following particulars: (1) God is holy. (2). Angels are holy. (3). Heaven is a holy place. (4). Whatever pleases God in heaven pleases him on earth. (5). When God made man he made him according to his ideal, -- holy. (6). Nothing pleases God as much as holiness. (7). Whatever is pleasing to God is good for us. (8). Holiness is pleasing to God, therefore its attainment would do us good. (9). Since holiness is for our good if we can be made holy in this life that fact would not only please God but would be a benefit to us. (10). Every church that calls itself Christian in one form or another accepts the doctrine of holiness.

But some claim that holiness can be attained in this life while others place its attainment at or beyond the article of death. This is where the disagreement enters and this is the vital point.

The Westminster Confession teaches: (1). Regeneration. (2). The indwelling of the Spirit. (3). The destruction of the dominion of sin. (4). The lusts of sin more and more weakened. (5). Saving graces more and more strengthened. (6). Growth in grace. (7). Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This all sounds good but the words that immediately follow are as disappointing and unseemly as snow in summer or rain in harvest. Prov. 26:1. Here is a man who is regenerated, has the Spirit dwelling within, the dominion of sin is destroyed, his lusts are more and more weakened, the graces more and more

strengthened and he is perfecting holiness in the fear of God, yet no matter how fast he grows he is always imperfect in this life, there are always remains of corruption in every part. Not much encouragement here! If he grows fifty long years, and grows never so fast, there are still "remains of corruption in every part," which nothing but the Calvinistic death purgatory can wash away! But, look, if he grows six months and no matter how slow he grows the same purgatory washes him clean and fits him for heaven! Not much encouragement here for the fifty year old saint! Nothing can make you clean but death purgatory! No matter how much you grow in grace, or how much sin is conquered and weakened or how much the blood of Christ is applied man must still groan in carnal bondage till his worst enemy, death, comes to deliver him! This same line of argument will apply to all imperfectionists.

But they may say, "It is not death that sanctifies but the blood of Christ." This concession yields the whole contention. If it is the blood of Christ that cleanses, then it can cleanse just as well before as at or after death. And if it can cleanse one minute before death it can cleanse one year or fifty years before. (There is not a scrap of scripture to prove that the soul is not cleansed until the body dies).

Again if men concede (and they do) that God can make a person holy at the time they are pleased to specify, then they must concede that he can make them holy when he pleases. Now look at the articles cited above to which all honest Christians agree and the following conclusions are inevitable. If it pleases God to have holy people in heaven it would please him to have them on earth. If I find what in me pleases God the most and give him an opportunity (and one which is consistent with the dignity of his divine government) to work that thing in me, he would be against himself if he did not do it.

Freedom from sin, which is holiness, all branches of the church will admit is the character in man that best pleases God; consequently, if he works in us that which is well pleasing in his sight he will make us holy. No matter whether or not any certain preacher or church teaches holiness as possible, they do not deserve even the name Christian if they do not admit it to be desirable. And if it is desirable, and I attain to it, they should not reject me, but rejoice that I have reached the goal.

If the less sin I commit the more pleasing I am to God it follows inevitably that if I can live without sin I will please him most. Will he not help me to do the thing that is pleasing to him and cease doing the things that are displeasing? Man's help is vain, but help has been laid on one that is mighty.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/harmon-a-baldwin/only-a-methodist-doctrine/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net