

Sanctification -- When It Is

by J.H. Collins

The speaker explains the scriptural account of sanctification and encourages the listeners to seek entire sanctification.

Scripture: Job 1:1, Luke 1:6, John 17:17, Romans 6:14, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10:14, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification Process"

Description

J.H. Collins preaches about the pursuit of Christian perfection, discussing the process of sanctification and the distinction between justification and entire sanctification. He emphasizes that sanctification is a gradual work that can be attained in this life, contrary to the belief that it can only be achieved at death. Collins uses biblical examples and scriptures to illustrate the journey from justification to complete sanctification, highlighting the need for believers to seek and experience the fullness of God's love and power in their lives.

Transcript

"And he sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready." (Luke 14:17).

A. I am glad to meet you this morning. It has truly been said: "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of a friend." I have lately been stirred up on the subject of Christian perfection. There are some things pertaining to this subject I have been able to settle satisfactorily in the Word of God; there are, however, some things of which I remain in doubt.

B. I am glad to hear you thus speak, as the Word of God must be the rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice.

A. Well, to continue, I can have no doubt that Christian perfection, or sanctification, is taught in the Word of God, since we there have examples of those who attained that state. To mention only a few: Job "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." (Job 1:1). Also, Zacharias and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:6). Of Nathanael our Saviour said: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" St. Paul says: "Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." Now, how could St. Paul speak wisdom among them that were perfect, if no one was perfect? This is all clear to me. The point upon which

I want light is, WHEN may one become entirely sanctified, or perfect in love?

B. I am glad, my brother, that you ask the question so plainly and directly. By the help of the Lord I will endeavor to answer by saying that there are two extreme views abroad in reference to this question. One of these extremes is that a Christian cannot be wholly sanctified until the hour of death. The other extreme is that a person is fully cleansed in the hour when first forgiven and born again.

A. What can be said of the first opinion?

B. To say that the soul cannot be made perfect until death is unwarranted by the Scriptures. It would argue that death, a conquered enemy, must be called in to accomplish that which the blood of Christ failed in effecting. Or it would argue that the blood of Christ, being feeble, must have the assistance of death to cleanse the soul from the last remains of sin. Either case would be dishonoring to the blood of Christ.

A. What, then, is the scriptural account of this matter?

B. "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." (Luke 1:74, 75). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved [kept in that state] blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thess. 5:23).

A. Are not persons sanctified when they are first converted?

B. They are sanctified in part, but not entirely, except it may be in a few rare instances.

A. Let us be careful to define just here, for my trouble has been to discover the line between a person newly converted and one made entirely holy. Please give the distinction.

B. When a soul is first converted, it is justified that is, its sins are forgiven, as in the case of the publican who went up into the temple to pray. He said: "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and he went down to his house justified. Now, as he prayed for the pardon of his sins, and in answer to prayer received justification, it follows that justification and pardon of sins must mean the same thing. Next, the moment a sinner is justified he receives the love of God shed abroad in his heart. This constitutes the life of God in his soul, so that "he is a new creature in Christ." He is also cleansed from all the defilement that had accrued to his soul on account of the sins he had committed. Through this principle of regeneration he also receives power to control sinful inclinations and to keep from sinning. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." (1 John 3:9). "Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Rom. 6:14).

A. I understand, then, that to be justified means a great deal, and that no one can be justified in committing sin.

B. They certainly cannot. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:8). The justified and the wholly sanctified are alike in the following: 1. They both have been forgiven of all their sins. 2. They both have been cleansed from all the defilement consequent upon the sins they have committed. 3. They both love God. 4. They are both tempted to sin. 5. They both do not sin. They are unlike in these: The wholly sanctified are cleansed from inbred sin; the justified are not. The sanctified are perfect in love; the justified are not. The sanctified are freed from inward temptations; the justified are not.

A. I have understood that temptations may come from three sources -- the world, the flesh, and the devil. Are Christians to expect freedom from these in this life?

B. As long as they live they will be tempted by the world and the devil; but when they reach the sanctified state, they are tempted no longer by the flesh, or, as we may otherwise term it, sinful inclinations. To set this in order: The unconverted man is controlled by sinful inclinations, and commits sin; the justified man controls sinful inclinations, and commits no sin; the wholly sanctified man is freed from sinful inclinations, and has, therefore, a reserve power upon which he rests.

A. Please explain these three states by illustration.

B. There was a time in the history of our country when Kentucky -- dark and bloody ground -- was entirely possessed and overrun by the Indians. They hunted through its forests; they fished in its waters. By and by Daniel Boone and other pioneers came within its borders. Immigration commenced. Then came a second period. War ensued between the whites and Indians. The struggle resulted in the subjugation of the natives. The whites were now the dominant party. The Indians still remained within the land. They were, however, in a state of subjection; but often they gave trouble by rebellion. The third period came, when the whites arose and drove the Indians from the country and destroyed them from the soil forever. They were not only the conquerors but the exterminators of the red men. They no longer had fear of insurrection from their enemies. To transfer this picture to the struggle between nature and grace: The first period is when inbred sin rules the soul, and the man commits sin besides; the second period, when grace triumphs in the regeneration of the heart, and inbred sin becomes subject to the divine life; the third period, when grace makes an end of inbred sin, the heart becomes sanctified wholly, fear being cast out, "for fear hath torment."

A. What is inbred sin?

B. It is a term used to represent sin inherited from Adam, in contradistinction to the sin committed by the individual sinner. It means inborn sin, original sin, a tendency to go astray. Mr. Whedon terms it a "sinwardness." The Bible speaks of it under a variety of names; as, "carnal mind," "body of sin," "old man."

A. What is said of this principle of sin by the Methodist Church and the Church of England?

B. Article VII. Of original or birth sin (Methodist Discipline): "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."

A. Why do we conclude original sin is not destroyed in the hour of justification?

B. Because: 1. It is against the testimony of all orthodox Churches. 2. It is contrary to the Word of God. 3. It is opposed to the general experience of Christians. In speaking on the first head, Mr. Wesley says that the doctrine "that there is no sin in believers is quite new in the Church of Christ; that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years -- never till it was discovered by Count Zinzendorf. I do not remember to have seen the least intimation of it either in any ancient or modern writer, unless, perhaps, in some of the wild, ranting Antinomians. And these likewise say and unsay, acknowledging that there is sin in their flesh, although no sin in their heart. But whatever doctrine is new must be wrong; for the old religion is the only true one; and no doctrine can be right unless it be the very same which was from the beginning." (Sermon

on Sin in Believers).

A. What class of scriptures teach that Christians are not entirely sanctified when first converted?

B. Those scriptures which are addressed to the justified, urging them on to perfection. If an army is stationed at Sacramento, the general might with propriety order his soldiers on to San Francisco. But if the army is already in San Francisco, the order would be unmeaning. The fact that the Scriptures exhort persons on to perfection is evidence that they have not reached that state. And such exhortations are given to those who were already in a justified state. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Here the apostle addresses his brethren, and exhorts them to perfection, which indicates that though they were believers, still they were not perfect. "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." (Rom. 12:1). The characters here addressed were brethren, and they were urged to make an offering which is answered by the sanctifying fire.

The disciples were converted persons. Jesus said, "Your names are written in heaven;" yet he prayed, "Father, sanctify them." This prayer was answered on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all filled with the Spirit." Paul prayed for his Thessalonian brethren, "May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly," which shows that although these were in a justified state, they were not wholly sanctified. Many other scriptures might be addressed to the purpose in hand.

A. What is the general experience of the people of God upon this subject?

B. They are blessed with peace and joy in the pardon of their sins -- sometimes with great rapture. By and by, their heavenly feelings subside, and they are led into a wilderness state. They are sometimes troubled with doubts and tormented with fears, until they reach the state of perfect love which "casts out fear."

A. How long need those who are justified wait until they seek entire sanctification?

B. After they are justified they need wait only until they discover the remains of sin, and consequently their need of the "higher life." This discovery may be made with some individuals sooner than others. It is determined, in a great measure, by the light thrown upon different individuals.

A. I praise God for the help I have gained from your conversation. I am determined, by the help of God, to know this full salvation. I am determined to seek it now; for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Now let me gain perfection's height

Now let me into nothing fall;

As less than nothing in thy sight,

And feel that Christ is all in all.

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