

Holiness and Experience -- Second Work of Grace

by Lewis T. Corlett

The sermon explores the transformative experience of holiness through the second work of grace, emphasizing heart purity and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Lewis T. Corlett preaches about the second work of grace, emphasizing the cleansing of the heart from the sin principle inherited from the race. He discusses terminology of holiness, including heart purity, baptism of the Holy Spirit, Christian perfection, death to self, singleness of eye, promise of the Father, abundant life, soul rest, and entire sanctification. Corlett explains how the Holy Spirit witnesses to this experience and highlights the importance of maintaining a walk of obedience and faith to continue in this sanctified state.

Transcript

The first work of grace is marvelous and complete in handling the "sinning problem" and making the seeker conscious that he is a son of God. Yet it does not take care of the sin principle inherited from the race. God has made ample provision for cleansing of the heart of the believer from this sin principle.

Terminology Of Holiness

1. Heart Purity

As with all other operations of the Divine, it is difficult for a human being to give a full and clear explanation of the inner work of God. There is a definite certainty about the consciousness that the work is done, but language seems inadequate to describe the rich experience God gives to those who consecrate their all to Him. Various terms have been used by leaders of Christian thought of all ages, some of which are given in an endeavor to describe some of the characteristics of this experience. One of the terms used most frequently is heart purity or heart cleansing, which has been used to signify the fulfillment of what John the Baptist prophesied of Jesus' work when he said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). Also Paul used this terminology in describing the purpose of Christ's sacrifice and death in, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and

gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). This is the outstanding fact that Peter designated as the direct result of the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the house of Cornelius: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9).

It is what the Psalmist was crying out for in his darkness after being guilty of vile sin, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). Webster, in the standard dictionary, also indicates that this is part of the work that is done by saying that sanctification not only means to set apart for sacred use but also "to make free from sin, to cleanse from moral corruption, to purify." The specific purpose of the second work of grace is to remove from the motivation of self-life the corruption which causes an individual to be self-centered. It does not include the removing from the mind and body of man all the effects of sin. He is still a human being in a world controlled primarily by sin and the devil; yet it is the purification of his motive life until there is nought in the moral nature of his inner life contrary to the Spirit of God. This is what Jesus Christ was praying for: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:17, 21). The writer to the Hebrews expresses this unity: "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11). The heart of the believer is cleansed from all inbred sin and filled with the presence of God, and the motive life of man is unified and harmonized with the nature of God. All conflict regarding the will of God is removed. All bias toward sin resulting in a tendency of the individual Christian to be self-centered is removed, and truly the Holy Spirit controls man.

2. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Sometimes this experience is known as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is the terminology that John used in introducing Jesus in Matt. 3:11. Also it is the language that Jesus Christ used when He said: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). As described in the former chapter, the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in the heart of the believer when he is born again, but there still remain the roots of sin with all their inclinations. Just as certainly as the disciples were commanded by Jesus to tarry for the promise of the Father, which was the baptism of the Holy Ghost, just as definitely Christians today are commanded to wait for the promise of the Father so that they may have the baptism of the Holy Spirit as well as the birth of the Spirit. There has been much error spread in the world of extremes connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit; but the great purpose of Christ in commanding His children to tarry for this promised blessing is that they may have the heart cleansing described in the former paragraph. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit the Spirit of God cleanses the heart from inbred sin and fills it to the full of man's capacity with himself.

3. Christian Perfection

Another descriptive term used for this second work of grace is Christian perfection. This refers to the completion of the work of God in the moral nature of mankind. Jesus commanded His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). The context of this scripture, as given by Jesus, shows that the perfection in man's heart is to be of that nature that a true parent has toward his children. For the commandment is to "be ... perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Not only is the perfection of love implied here, but John in his

First Epistle clarifies this command by saying: "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:5-6). "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him, Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4:16-21).

The essence of Christian experience is "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Rebellion to God and hatred toward mankind are removed as man comes in his penitence and receives the divine touch of pardon and forgiveness. A new nature is planted within him, but it is not long before that new nature finds a contrary element in the self-life which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). There is a conflict in the self-life which generally takes the form of self-interest and self-seeking as against being completely centered in Christ, His will and purpose. Many have testified through the ages to this type of conflict. The second work of grace is God's program whereby this element opposed to love can be purged from man's self-life and his whole motive life can be completely controlled or perfected in love. This does not mean that he is not tempted to take the wrong attitude toward people or things. But it does mean that the inner nature is purified so that he is able to withstand the suggestions of the tempter from the outside. It is God's answer to remedy the cross emotions of man's soul with a purging of this antagonistic element from the self-life and the complete filling of this nature with His love. This brings the Christian to the place where he can join with Paul in an explanation of his service: "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14).

4. Death to Self

The second work of grace has sometimes been designated as the crucifixion of the self-life. This terminology is taken from Paul's statement: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). This is not a characteristic of the sanctified life as much as it is the necessary requisite for men to be sanctified, and yet it must be sustained if man is to retain his state of heart holiness.

This term confuses many people because they cannot quite understand how the self-life of man can be crucified and yet the individual continue to live in a physical world. The primary meaning of this term is that the child of God follows the injunction of 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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). He presents all of his personal claims to his own faculties, possessions, and relationships to God with the avowed purpose that they are God's for time and eternity, for sacrifice or for service, according as He sees fit. This includes all the ambitions, plans, aspirations, and wishes that the individual may have had for anything pertaining to self-satisfaction in the use of these powers or possessions. It is bringing the soul to the place described by the poet:

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;

I want Thee forever to live in my soul.

Break down every idol; cast out every foe;

Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

This entire consecration is an active deed on the part of man to present himself for divine direction; yet it is motivated by a strong desire to have his whole life unified and harmonized in the divine purpose. It is a yielding of his ransomed powers to the guidance of a Wisdom that is greater than all mankind together. It is the surrendering of the claims of the self-life and an anchoring of them in the divine will. When this is done, the individual does not become a passive agent, but a yielded agent waiting for orders with a determination to carry out the divine program regardless of what should come.

5. Singleness of Eye

Another term used in an endeavor to describe or explain this experience of the second work of grace is that of singleness of eye. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6: 22-23) Singleness of eye is the opposite to the double mind which James speaks of: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (Jas. 4: 8). In the second work of grace through the cleansing, purging power of the Holy Spirit, this instability of mind and purpose is removed and man's vision is clarified and he has an eye single to the glory of God. Now he looks not for those things which would advance self or which would be the most favorable for the self-life, but for that which would glorify and honor God. He is definitely "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." His goal is to please Him; his purpose is to carry out His will; his aim is to fulfill the divine command; and his desire is to increase in the love of God.

6. Promise of the Father

In giving a farewell address to His disciples, Jesus Christ gave a promise in connection with the command, "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This promise was that they should receive power which would be an enabling factor in life. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). They obeyed the divine command; and, in Acts 2:1-4, the record is given that they received the promise of the Father and they were truly endued with power from on high.

While many have misunderstood the meaning of this power and have brought reproach and shame to the cause of holiness by foolish acts and statements, yet this is the true promise of the Father for His children of every generation. It is not sensational power merely to attract and please a curious crowd, but it is primarily power to control man's spirit and to direct his life and service in channels of usefulness in the kingdom of God. It is an establishing power, which is seen in the lives of the disciples and apostles through the various persecutions that were brought to them in the record of the Book of Acts. It is power to keep poise of character and to manifest a sweet spirit regardless of what others may do. It is the power of a hidden joy that gives happiness in the midst of all kinds of circumstances, whether they be pleasant or

unpleasant. Someone misunderstood this to be ecstasy, but ecstasy is simply an outward exhibition of inner enjoyment. There are times when it is not proper and fitting to display ecstasy, but there never is a time when the steady flow of the power of joy is not needed and is not present. It is a power to believe God when everything about would say that God's plan is impossible. That is the reason the Apostle Paul could stand before his captors on the ship that was buffeted by the sea and say, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

There are many times in each individual's life when surroundings and circumstances are just as dismal as those which Paul faced in this shipwreck; yet the enjoyment of the second work of grace will give him an inner stability of faith that will hold him steady and make him ready to progress as soon as opportunity comes. It is also power to suffer and to fulfill the statement: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (I Cor. 13:4). It is the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling and abiding in the human heart unhindered by the self-seeking, self-indulgent attitude. It is God controlling the entire life of the believer.

7. Abundant Life

Another term used to characterize this second work of grace is the abundant life. Jesus Christ told His disciples: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). In Rom. 8:9-11, Paul speaks about how this life is brought to the individual through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:9-11). An individual who is regenerated receives the life of God in his inner life. Truly he is born again and made "a new creature in Christ Jesus." He is the possessor of a new nature in Christ Jesus; yet at times this life is hindered and hampered by the presence of carnality in the self-life. Sin is disease as well as rebellion, and the poison of this disease hinders the life from enjoying the fullness that it should.

An analogy to this diseased nature can be brought out in the way that an individual may have physical life hindered by the presence of poison in some part of his system. The writer had the sad experience of enduring several years of poor health on account of the poison of diseased tonsils. It was not the pain of a local soreness in the throat, but the poison from these diseased tonsils was draining into the system and robbing the body of the health that should have been enjoyed. One day, in a period of illness, a doctor located the source of poison and in a few weeks advised that the tonsils be removed. In a short time this advice was followed, the tonsils were removed, and after a few months the author enjoyed a sense of life -- of abundant life -- that he had not had for many years. This is a limited analogy, but carnality in the life of man is pouring the poison into his inner being which counteracts the life of God in his heart. When this source of poison is removed through the purging baptism of the Holy Ghost, man's inner life becomes stronger as it is unified and harmonized in the will of God; and his outward life becomes more poised and useful in the service of the Kingdom. Truly there is the more abundant life that Jesus promised to give to His children.

8. Soul Rest

The sanctified experience brings to the individual a sense of rest which results from the cessation of the conflict of carnality with the self-life. The writer to the Hebrews explains this in the fourth chapter: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Heb. 4:9-10). This is the rest which comes to the soul which is relieved of the strife of internal conflict. It is the rest of an individual who becomes unified in purpose and objective. It is the rest of one who has received the smile and approval of his Beloved and enjoys the assurance which comes as a result. In regeneration the believer enjoys a rest from condemnation, but in sanctification there is a rest of God which takes possession of the inner life, giving calmness, assurance, peace, and satisfaction.

In the new birth man makes peace with God, but in the second work of grace he has the peace of God controlling his life. This is what the prophet Isaiah spoke about when he said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa.

26:3). This experience of heart holiness brings a sense of peace and rest that passeth all understanding and produces a calmness and serenity of soul which can be enjoyed and manifested but yet cannot be described. There is the enjoyment of the full fellowship of the human soul with its Creator and Redeemer. It is the pleasure of the soul as he walks and talks with his Master.

9. Entire Sanctification

The last terminology that will be given in an attempt to describe this experience is entire sanctification. This is the term that was stressed so much by John and Charles Wesley. It is based primarily upon Paul's statement: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:23). In regeneration and justification there is a partial cleansing of the life. It is the removal of acquired sin; sanctification brings the removal of inherited sin. The life of the regenerated is a holy life as far as outward acts and relationships are concerned. The second work of grace is a cleansing of the inner life so that truly a man may be said to be "sanctified wholly." To some this may seem an equivocation of terms, but it is not. It is a distinction that is given in the Bible and has been advocated by many outstanding preachers and leaders of religious thought.

The Holy Spirit Witnesses To The Second Work Of Grace

The question is raised many times as to how an individual can know that he has received this experience or what is the sign that the individual has come into the relationship where God can cleanse the heart from sin. Many evidences have been advocated, but people because of their individuality will manifest this experience in various ways. Some will be hilarious while others will be more quiet. Some will indicate the assurance by physical activity of some sort, while to others there is a deep sense of peace and calmness and rest. To all there is the definite witness of the Spirit to this experience, similar to the manner by which the Spirit of God made the penitent believer conscious that he had been born again. The writer to the Hebrews states this emphatically: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before" (Heb. 10:14-15). This witness of the Spirit is an inner reality giving definiteness, certainty, and assurance that the work of cleansing has been done and that He has filled the soul to overflowing with His presence and power.

A Walk Of Obedience And Faith

The second work of grace is maintained in a manner similar to that by which the first work is continued. It is not a static position whereby an individual can say because he was sanctified yesterday he is sanctified today. Rather it is a living relationship of the redeemed soul with his God. As long as the believer keeps his contract of abandonment to God, God keeps him pure. As long as the individual walks in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin. The sanctified soul has only to keep himself unreservedly in the hands of the Master with firm purpose to live for Him, whether it be for sacrifice or service. As long as these conditions are maintained, he will enjoy the blessing and the fellowship of the abiding Holy Spirit, who will comfort, strengthen, guide, teach, illuminate, and endow for any needed work or service for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/lewis-t-corlett/holiness-and-experience-second-work-of-grace/>

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