

Christian Perfection: A Second Blessing

by Samuel Chadwick

Samuel Chadwick's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and pursuing Christian Perfection as a transformative second blessing in the believer's life.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 1:13, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 6:1, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:15, 2 Peter 1:3

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about the deep-rooted prejudice against Christian Perfection as a second definite experience assured to the soul, highlighting the reluctance to embrace a sharp and definite crisis in both Regeneration and Sanctification due to modern theological influences. He emphasizes the importance of experiencing a Second Blessing, even if the terminology is contested, as it signifies a distinct work of grace subsequent to Regeneration, leading to the cleansing of the carnal mind and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Chadwick underscores the Methodist doctrine of holiness as a definite experience for believers, emphasizing the need for a crisis, acceptance, and confession in receiving this Second Blessing.

Transcript

There is a deep-rooted prejudice against Christian Perfection as a second definite experience assured to the soul. The prejudice is so great that even convention teachers rarely use the term. Substitutes have been invented which take away the offense because they take off the edge. Both in Regeneration and in Sanctification there is a shrinking from the sharp and definite experience of a crisis. Theology has been taken captive by the modern spirit. The theory of evolution has relegated everything sudden and supernatural to the limbo of superstition. We are impressed by the operations that take millenniums, and suspect whatever is wrought by processes we cannot trace and powers we cannot schedule. We can understand culture, but distrust conversion. Growth appeals to our sense of reason, but a sudden elimination of inherited tendencies is not in harmony with the process of Nature. That is why so much modern preaching is vague and ineffective. It is of the sheet-lightning sort; it shines but does not strike. Glittering generalities may dazzle, but they accomplish nothing. Wesley reproached his preachers in the Launceston Circuit because they "either did not speak of Perfection at all (the peculiar doctrine committed to our trust) or they speak of it only in general terms, without urging the believers to go on unto Perfection, and to expect it every moment, and wherever this is not done the work of God does not prosper."

WHY CALL IT A SECOND BLESSING?

Is it worth while to contend for a term? That depends upon what is involved in its surrender. Not infrequently we hear men told to "call it what they please, it does not matter what you call it if you get it." That is true, and yet the more general terms reveal a dislike of the experience which comes as a crisis. The names substituted are beautifully suggestive and singularly evasive. "A deeper work of Grace,," "the Higher Life," and "a Great Blessing" have a gracious and soothing sound, but they lack definiteness, certainty, and assurance. The new names are more indicative of pietism than of testimony. Why this vagueness and laxity in defining Entire Sanctification? True, in matters of life there cannot be the same exactness as in machinery.

Experience varies in sanctification as in conversion with temperament and education. No one pleads for uniformity. There are Twelve Gates into the City, and they are equally distributed to all points of the compass. Some enter the blessing as they enter the Kingdom without consciousness of time or place, but an assurance is given them of cleansing as of pardon and reconciliation. Whether we call it a Second Blessing or not, that is what it is. It is distinct from Regeneration and subsequent to it. Those who contend that they received all that is involved in salvation when they were "born again" do not distinguish between potentiality and conscious possession. The man is in the child, but manhood can be attained only in stages.

The experience is the crisis when the immaturity of "Babes in Christ" passes into the mature consciousness of the full-grown. In pagan religions there is a period of initiation. It is said that the process is associated with things that are vile, but the vital point is that it marks a crisis, a transition, an introduction to the powers and responsibilities of manhood. The reproach of the Corinthian Christians was that they had passed the age of adolescence and were still children in experience and understanding. They failed to understand because they had missed the experience of initiation. The "First" Blessing comprehends justification, regeneration, and adoption; and the "Second" Blessing brings cleansing of the carnal mind, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The term is not scriptural, but that is true of many doctrinal terms, and there can be no objection so long as it stands for an equivalent of biblical teaching.

THE SECOND BLESSING A METHODIST DOCTRINE

All teaching of holiness as a definite experience agrees that it is for the "elect through grace." It is for those who are born again of the Spirit, for Christians and not for unbelievers. That is by faith, of grace, and by the Spirit. Like conversion it involves a crisis, an acceptance, and a confession. Wesley taught it as a definite blessing instantaneously received by faith. He held that believers are not entirely sanctified in regeneration, but are delivered from the remains of sin by a second work of grace. He called it a "second blessing" and a "second change." He tested those who professed the experience with the care and fidelity of a scientist. He cross-examined the witnesses with the severity of a lawyer. His conclusions were not based upon a few exceptional cases, and so sure was he of the doctrine, that he says if he is mistaken in this he is clearly convinced his whole meaning of Scripture must be mistaken. So strongly convinced was he that three months before his death he wrote:

"If we can prove that any of our local preachers or leaders, either directly or indirectly, speak against it, let him be a local preacher or leader no longer."

With some, Dr. W. B. Pope has more weight than John Wesley. In his sermon on the Healing of the Blind Man, in Mark 8, he says:

"I have sometimes very delicately scrupled at this, that, and the other expression, and I have wondered whether it is right to speak of a 'second blessing' ... in the face of this text, and in the face of the experience of multitudes of our fathers; in the face of multitudes now living, and in the face of the deep instinct, the hope and desire of my own unworthy heart, I will never again write or speak against the phraseology referred to." I heard these words from his own lips, and shall never forget the humility and emotion with which they were spoken. He lacked the assertive confidence of shallower men, but his testimony was not wanting, and his spirit was its daily exposition. There has been much confusion and many abuses of the doctrine, but thousands can testify to the experience.

It is difficult to choose, for there is "a great cloud of witnesses," and there is not space to tell all their testimony; but let Charles Inwood, a world-known Keswick speaker and missionary, give his. He was a Methodist, and reared in the best type of Methodist home. While still a boy at school he was converted, knew it, and lived it. Then when he had become a minister there came to him a wonderful experience of Sanctification -- a distinctly second work of grace. There had been no backsliding, no Blackness, no compromise, but there came to him a great soul-hunger, a need of cleansing, and a longing to be filled with the Spirit of God. This is how it came.

"God led me on Friday morning, simply as a little child, to trust Him for this priceless gift, the fullness of the Holy Spirit. By simple, naked faith I took the gift, but I was not conscious of receiving anything. All through that day there seemed even a deeper dryness and dullness in one's soul -- no new pulsations, no new sense of the presence of God. . . . Sunday morning just as dry as ever; and the Sunday morning service came, and during the proclamation of the message, there came silently stealing into my heart a strange new sense of ease and rest and peace. That is how it began; and then it deepened, hour by hour during the day, deepened in the service in the evening, and in the after-meeting it seemed to culminate in one great tidal wave of the glory of God that swelled and submerged and interpenetrated, and broke me down in silent, holy adoration in God's presence."

Out of that baptism there emerged the Apostolic ministry of the sanctified Charles Inwood, and its rivers flowed to the ends of the earth.

The doctrine is scriptural, and that is more important than being Methodist, but with the Methodist there rests a heavier responsibility than most. It was for this testimony the Methodist Church was raised up, and this is the special "depositum" committed to its trust.

Ever fainting with desire,

For Thee, O Christ, I call;

Thee I restlessly require,

I want my God, my all!

Jesus, dear redeeming Lord,

I wait Thy coming from above;

Help me, Saviour, speak the word,

And perfect me in love.

Lord, if I on Thee believe,
The second gift impart;
With the indwelling spirit give
A new, a contrite heart;
If with love Thy heart is stored,
If now o'er me Thy mercies move,
Help me, Saviour, speak the word,
And perfect me in love.
Let me gain my calling's hope,
O make the sinner clean!
Dry corruption's fountain up,
Cut off the entail of sin;
Take me into Thee, my Lord,
And I shall then no longer rove;
Help me, Saviour, speak the word,
And perfect me in love.
Grant me now the bliss to feel
Of those that are in Thee;
Son of God, Thyself reveal,
Engrave Thy name on me;
As in heaven be here adored,
And let me now the promise prove;
Help me, Saviour, speak the word,
And perfect me in love.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-chadwick/christian-perfection-a-second-blessing/>

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