

Address to Seekers

by Thomas Cook

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking entire sanctification through faith, a settled purpose, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:22, Ezekiel 36:25, John 17:17, Romans 6:11, Ephesians 3:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches on the pursuit of entire sanctification, emphasizing the importance of having a clear understanding of the goal to reach it as a definite point of attainment. He highlights that holiness is revealed by the Holy Spirit, who shows us our sin and provides the remedy, guiding us to aim at a specific point. Cook stresses that while we may not fully comprehend the doctrine, we must know what we seek and pursue it with unwavering determination, focusing on the distinct characteristics of entire sanctification.

Transcript

We do not need to have a complete grasp of the doctrine of entire sanctification in all its relations and bearings in order to enjoy the experience, but if we can have a clear and distinct view of the thing at which we aim it will help us very much to reach it as a definite point of attainment.

In one of the churches of Rome there is a beautiful painting. Those who stand in one position before it always say they see no beauty in it -- that it appears like a huge tangled mass. But when the guide leads you to where the light falls properly on the picture, suddenly its wondrous beauty dawns upon you. So it is with holiness. It is only when the Holy Spirit furnishes the light that we see clearly what our privilege is. He only can reveal sin and present the remedy. When we ask humbly and earnestly for His illumination we see clearly the point we are to aim at. "He that willet to do His will shall know of the doctrine."

We need not stop to settle all the points of doctrine, but we must know what we want and seek that.

While I take for granted that we are agreed in the main as to what entire sanctification is, let me once again mention its main characteristics. (1) It is a distinct state of grace from justification. (2) It includes the full cleansing of the soul from inbred sin, so that it becomes pure, or free from sinful inclinations and tendencies. (3) It includes the filling of the heart with all the graces and fruits of the Spirit. This means being perfected in love-filled to present capacity, and kept filled as the vessel enlarges.

David, who longed for inward purity, prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." The Saviour prayed "Sanctify them through Thy truth." The Apostle prays. "The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly." These are specific prayers for the blessing of entire sanctification. We must fix our attention upon this one object. This must be everything to us. As Dr. Peck says, "For the time being the hell we would be delivered from must be the hell of inbred sin; and the heaven we would attain, the heaven of loving God alone."

Are we convinced that this experience is attainable in this present life?

A firm conviction on this point goes far towards our realizing it. Some believe that such a state may be approximated, but never reached. But what man will strive long for what he believes to be impossible? "We are saved by hope." Confidence that we shall succeed is essential to sustain us in the pursuit of the experience we have in view. Does not the Bible command us to be holy? If the experience is not attainable, God requires what is impossible. God will surely give that which He commandeth.

And is this experience not expressly promised in the Scriptures? What could be clearer than such a statement as "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 25). Other promises might be quoted, but in the case of such a direct utterance they are not necessary. Repeated and varied statements may heighten the certainty that the exact idea is apprehended, but one, "Thus said the Lord," is sufficient to establish any truth. "If we deny the possibility of being free from sin in this world," says St. Augustine, "we violate man's free will who voluntarily desires it, and God's power who offers to accomplish it."

Would inspired men have made this the subject of definite, fervent and earnest prayer if they had not believed their prayers could be answered? Was not the Son of God manifested "to destroy the works of the Devil," and is it not distinctly stated that "the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"? If these are "the true saying; of God,"

Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me, We shall from all our sin be free.

Receiving this truth into our minds, let us resolve that we will seek the experience at once, that we shall give God no rest until we hear Him speak the second time, "Be clean." None but those who have a settled, uncompromising and unconquerable purpose will succeed. It will require invincible resolution not to hesitate when the knife is put to the heart to amputate its idols. A feeble resolution will soon be overcome, and many fail for want of this strength of purpose. Is there one whom difficulties dishearten, who bends to the storm? He will do but little. Is there one who will conquer? That kind of man always succeeds. God yields to a thoroughly determined soul, just as difficulties do. The violent take the Kingdom of Heaven by force. Intensity of spirit, importunity, and perseverance in prayer will surely prevail. Our great need is more desire. "Desires," says an old writer, "are the sails of the mind." When our desire is deep, intense, burning enough to make us willing to sacrifice every idol, to put away all evil, not to shrink when God demands what is dear as a right hand or precious as a right eye, we shall soon hear a voice from the Throne saying, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Instead of frittering away our time in contemplation, let us at once resolutely make up our minds that we will have the blessing now. Our effort will soon grow feeble, and our vehement desire cool down, unless we adhere to the idea of present blessing. This determination is all-important and needs to be emphasized repeatedly. Payson's dying regret was that he had only lived a few months in Beulah Land when he might have lived there thirty years. "Many are not in the enjoyment of holiness simply because they have never reached a point at which they have said, 'I must have the blessing now.' " This remark by Mrs. Palmer led

a minister some years ago to see the cause of his failure. He went immediately to his study, locked the door, and falling upon his knees determined he would never leave the room until he had been cleansed from all sin. Since that day he has borne constant witness to the power of Christ to save to the uttermost. We must put a "now" into our prayers. Unless we do this we pray in vain.

Does it seem too great a thing that in a moment our sinful nature can be purified, that all the evil within can be uprooted, and our whole being filled with light and love and power? Our answer is, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It is God's work, and what He undertakes He will accomplish. He graciously condescends to assure us of His ability to save us to the uttermost. "Wherefore He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). Amongst the many mighty words of Scripture there are few, if any, so full and grand as this word "uttermost." It is easy to see that it is composed of two words; utter, and most; utter means total, complete, entire, perfect; most means the utmost extent, the highest degree, the farthest point. Put the two words together, and we learn that Christ is able to save perfectly, to the uttermost extent of our need.

But no English words can express completely the fullness of meaning contained in the original word. Translators have all been puzzled with it, and in consequence we find it translated very differently by various authorities. Dr. Mahan gives the literal translation as "all perfection." In the Dutch Bible it is rendered "perfectly;" in the German, "for ever;" in the Catholic, "eternally," and by Dr. Stier, "most completely." Dean Alford says, "Some take this for time, for ever; but this is not the use of the word. Completeness is the idea." Perhaps Dr. Clarke is nearest the mark when he says, "The original word seems to combine the two ideas of continuity and utmost completeness; hence Jesus is able to save forever to the utmost." This is not unlike Luther's translation, "Always, under all circumstances, and at all times, all that come to God by Him." What can this assurance mean if God is not willing to save to the extent indicated by this word? What benefit would it be to tell the Church that He had power to do this, if there were not implied an intention to do for us what He is able to do, and what we all need to have done?

But that all doubt may be removed from our minds as to the Divine ability to save with this all-comprehensive completeness (and ability here is so necessarily connected with willingness, that the one indisputably implies the other), St. Paul concludes his remarkable prayer for the Ephesian Christians by asserting that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all our asking and thinking." Read through that prayer, as recorded in Ephesians iii. 14-19. It would surely seem that neither language nor thought could grasp any greater wealth of blessing. But no; God's power to bless must not be confined to what even Paul can ask and think. So he concludes with a wondrous doxology, that shall for ever forbid any attempt to limit our conceptions of the exceeding greatness of the power of Christ to save. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." How inspiring to know that God is able to do all we ask. But St. Paul adds, "or think." Thought can go far beyond language, but even all our thinking does not come up to the measure of God's power and bountifulness, as expressed in this passage. Dr. Clarke says the idea is "superabundantly -- above the greatest abundance." No words can express what God is able and willing to do for the soul that commits itself fully to Him. But how we have limited the Holy One of Israel! We have done as Martha and her sister Mary did when they came to Jesus in their trouble about their departed brother. The great mistake they made was to limit the Master's power. First, they limited Him as to place -- "Lord, if Thou hadst been here." Then they limited Him as to time. He had been "buried four days." And lastly they limited Him as to degree. They believed that He would be raised at the last day, but they did not believe that Jesus could do it now.

Do not let us fall into this same error. Let us think less of the weakness of our broken-down humanity, and more of "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." Surely our faith need not stagger when the God who created the universe and who upholds it by the word of His power undertakes immediately to cleanse our hearts from inbred sin by the putting forth of His omnipotent power. Did not our Lord while on earth make men perfectly whole? His healing work on the body was immediate and complete. That was a type of His work on the soul. When we learn to estimate aright the exceeding riches of His grace we shall not hesitate to say:-

I, even I, shall see His face; I shall be holy here.

To this confidence that God is able and willing to cleanse our souls from all sin now, there needs to be added one thing more -- a Divine evidence and conviction that He doeth it. That even now, as I venture myself upon Him, the very God of Peace sanctifies me wholly, and Christ's most precious blood cleanses me from all sin. If our consecration be real and thorough, and we are willing to forsake all, to live a life of self-surrender, of self-nothingness, to lose ourselves in God, appropriating faith is the one thing lacking. We must determine that we will believe, come what will. "Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word "reckon" is only another word for faith. We obtain full salvation by reckoning or believing at God's bidding that we are "dead indeed unto sin." "As when you reckon with your creditor or with your host," says Mr. Fletcher, "and as when you have paid all, you reckon yourself free, so now reckon with God. Jesus has paid all, and He hath paid for Thee -hath purchased thy pardon and holiness. Therefore, it is now God's command, 'Reckon thyself dead unto sin, and thou art alive unto God from this hour.' " The very command is in itself a pledge that in moment of our faith God will work in us what He bids us believe. Our duty is just to obey, not to question. God will make the reckoning good, or His word is a deception.

It may be in direct contradiction to all our past and present experience to say, "I am dead to sin; henceforth I live only for God," but God commands it and we must not hesitate. We cannot be wrong in obeying the command and venturing to believe or reckon that God does now, by the power of His spirit, fulfill in us the work of faith with power. It is not more prayer that is needed. The time has come when prayer must give place to faith. The command now is not "ask," but "take." Have you made room for Christ by a thorough consecration to Him? If so, reckon He does come to His temple, that He does fully possess you, and because He fills you with His life you are now "dead unto sin and alive unto God." "O, begin, begin to reckon now; fear not, believe, believe, believe, and continue to believe every moment. So shalt thou continue free, for it is retained, as it is received, by faith alone."

"Tis done, Thou dost this moment save,

With full salvation bless;

Redemption through Thy blood I have,

And spotless love and peace.

Our chapter on this subject would not be complete if mention were not made of the fact that it is possible to seek the blessing of holiness from unworthy motives. Murray McCheyne saw the peril of seeking a higher experience for notoriety -- to establish a reputation for sanctity -- he mentions how he felt the necessity of watching against this. Of all unholy things there is surely nothing more loathsome in the sight of God than a desire to be reputed saintly for the credit of the thing. A second danger is the desire for

prominence among those who are eminently useful. Some seek a higher life in the hope of becoming the Moodys and Spurgeons of their day and generation. They seek fame and popularity to augment their own importance. Others have in view the delicious ecstasy which it will bring. Their desire is to be happy -- the exhilaration, the rapture of the life is the object of their quest. They seek the gift, not the Giver. These are all subtle forms of self-seeking. The desire for a fuller life must rise from a loftier motive. It must center in God. He must be sought for His own worthiness. The attraction must be the incomparable beauty of His character, not any mere gift at His disposal. To glorify Him must be our aim, perfect identity of interest with Christ, not personal enjoyment or reputation. Thus said the Lord God, "I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for My Holy Name's sake" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 22).

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