

Sanctifying Faith

by Thomas Cook

Faith is the condition for sanctification, and it implies knowledge, assent, and appropriation, which enables us to receive the blessing from God.

Scripture: Mark 11:24, Acts 26:18, Romans 4:20, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:6, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Faith And Works"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches on the distinction between consecration and entire sanctification, emphasizing that consecration is our voluntary act of giving our all to God, while entire sanctification is a work of the Holy Ghost within us. He highlights the importance of faith in both forgiveness and sanctification, stressing that God's power transforms us instantly when we believe and receive His promises. Cook encourages believers to trust in God's ability to cleanse their hearts from all sin and to boldly claim the blessing of sanctification through unwavering faith in God's promises.

Transcript

There is this difference between consecration and entire sanctification -- the one is what we do ourselves by Divine aid, the other is what God does in us. Consecration is our voluntary act in which we give our all to God, while entire sanctification is a work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. There may be entire consecration without entire sanctification, but there cannot be the latter without the former. The act of consecration must be followed by definite prayer for a clean heart, and then the act of faith by which we receive what we ask for. In answer to our prayer and response to our faith God will put forth His power, and we shall be changed in a moment from indwelling sin to indwelling holiness. We are saved by grace. Just as over the blessing of justification, God has written over entire sanctification "to him that worketh not." Works have no more to do with the sanctifying of the soul than they have to do with the justifying of the soul. Faith is the condition in the one as well as in the other. There are many passages which expressly teach this. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "An inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Many others might be quoted to the same effect. The real difficulty we find in presenting the salvation of God to the inquirer who is seeking forgiveness is this way of faith. We cannot make him see it is of faith and of faith only. Hence his groans, his tears, his weary efforts to mend his life, and in some measure to fit himself for God's acceptance. When at last the way of faith is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit he soon finds peace with God and the work is done.

Exactly so is it with sanctification. It is only when we cease from our own efforts and trust in Christ alone that blessing comes. The faith by which we are sanctified is the same exercise of the mind and heart as that which brings forgiveness, only having respect to different promises and other aspects of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus. Works require time for their execution. Faith, on the contrary, is an act of the soul. In a moment the soul, by the exercise of faith, can "wash and be clean." Writing to his brother Charles, in the year 1766, John Wesley said, "Insist everywhere on full redemption received now by faith alone. Press the instantaneous blessing." On another occasion he wrote, "To talk of this work as being gradual would be nonsense, as much as if we talked of gradual justification." "Expect it by faith," he said, "expect it as you are, expect it now. To deny one of these is to deny them all." Dr. Adam Clarke says: "Every penitent is exhorted to believe on the Lord Jesus, that he may receive remission of sins. He does not, he cannot, understand that the blessing thus promised is not to be received today, but at some future time. In like manner, to every believer the new heart and right spirit are offered in the present moment, that they may in that moment be received. For as the work of cleansing and renewing the heart is the work of God, His almighty power can perform it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And as it is our duty to love God with all our heart, and we cannot do this until He cleanses our hearts, consequently He is ready to do it this moment; because He wills that we should in this moment love Him. Therefore, we may justly say, 'Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.' He who in the beginning caused light in a moment to shine out of darkness, can in a moment shine into our hearts, and give us to see the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This moment, therefore, we may be emptied of sin, filled with holiness, and become truly happy."

Provision for our sanctification has been made as fully as for our justification, and faith must receive it. "What is required," says the saintly Fletcher, "is a bold, hearty, steady venturing upon the truth of the promise, with an appropriating act." We believe that God is able to cleanse our hearts from all sin. We believe, also that He is willing to do this, and we know that He has promised to do it, Do we believe that having promised, He is able and willing to do it now, at this very moment, on condition of our faith? If so, the venture of faith is all that is required, which says, "He doeth it now." "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

The scriptural warrant for this is very clear. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." We are required to believe that we receive when we pray in order that we may have. We are not asked to believe that we have before we have, but to believe that we receive what we ask for. There are two extremes to be guarded against. Both are not far from the truth, and the more dangerous for that reason. One asks us to believe what is not true, that we have what we have not; the other leaves our faith indefinite, and asks us to believe that we shall receive at some future time. The truth is between the extremes. We are to regard God as in the act of bestowing the blessing while we pray, and to believe, not that we received it some time ago, nor that we shall receive it at some future time, but that we receive it just now. To believe that we shall receive is to make a chasm between the act of faith and the bestowment of the blessing. It is false humility which says, "In God's appointed time I shall receive the answer to my prayer." With Him there is no such thing as time. Centuries, years, months, weeks, days are nothing to God. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The conditions being fulfilled, God is as willing to grant our petition when we pray as ever He will be, if we are asking for spiritual blessing such as He has promised to bestow. There need be no "ifs," or "peradventures," or "maybes," where there is a direct and specific promise. "Ask and receive that your joy may be full."

Faith is represented in the Scriptures as "looking," "touching," "taking," none of which we do gradually. We either look or we do not look, we touch or we do not touch. If a gift is offered we must either take it or we do not take it. Faith is the hand that receives what God offers. There is surely no presumption in doing what God directs, and the direction is: "When ye pray, believe that ye receive ... and ye shall have ..." "While they are yet speaking I will hear." It is the language of true God-inspired faith to say:-

I take the blessing from above, And wonder at Thy boundless love.

Faith implies three things -- knowledge, assent, and appropriation. We sometimes sing:-

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, And looks to that alone.

But it sees more than that it sees the Promiser It knows that every promise is built upon four pillars each one as strong as the pillars of heaven -- God's justice or holiness which will not suffer Him to deceive, His grace and goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget His truth, which will not suffer Him to change; and His power, which makes Him able to accomplish. We must know God before we can trust Him. But knowledge is not enough in itself. Most believers know of the power, of the love, and faithfulness of God, as well as the conditions upon which He has promised to bless. Many assent to the facts that God is able and willing to bestow just now the blessing they seek, some even go as far as to assert their conviction that if they believe they receive it they know they shall have it, but they fail to appropriate the promise and make it their own. They hesitate to say, "God does just now bestow it, I do receive it," and without this all is vain. The faith that sanctifies says, "God loves now and gives, I ask now and receive." "Sink or swim," it says, "I cast myself on this sea of infinite love and truth."

In all the confidence of hope I claim the blessing now.

"But," says one, "am I to believe I receive when I feel no change? The ground of your faith must not be your feelings, but the word of God. What we have to be sure of is that we fulfill the condition on which the promise is made. When we have done this it is our duty to believe that God answers our prayer, according to His promise. This is simple faith. We are not required to know, but to believe. When it pleases God He will give us the joyful assurance that the work is done, but in the meantime we must fix our faith upon the immutable word and keep on insisting that God is true. Faith lets God be true and every man a liar. The Divine order is, first believe, then receive, then know. Those who are waiting for feeling want to reverse this order, they want the evidence first, the blessing next, and the faith upon which it is conditioned, last. But we cannot know that we are cleansed until the experience is an accomplished fact, and that is not possible until we believe. Feeling is not faith, nor is it salvation, nor the condition of salvation. The faith that sanctifies is "a naked faith in a naked promise," which means committing ourselves entirely to God and His promise, apart altogether from emotion. Feelings often mislead us, but the promise of God is sure. Trusting in the absence of all feeling may seem a risky thing, but many have done it and prove the truth of Whittier's words

The foot of faith falls on the seeming void And finds the rock beneath.

Which is most reliable, the immutable promise of God, or our uncertain emotions? On this point, St. Peter speaks with no uncertain sound. In the first chapter of his Second Epistle he tells how, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he heard the voice from Heaven, he saw the Divine glory, and he felt such delightful sensations that he wanted to build three tabernacles and stay there. But he goes on to say, "We have a more sure word of Prophecy," something more sure than hearing, seeing, or feeling -- the Word of God

which abideth for ever. It is as though he had said our senses might have deceived us, but the Word of God is as firm as the Throne of the Eternal. We may tremble, but that Rock never will. The Blood of Christ, the veracity of God, yea, every attribute in the Deity, is pledged to the fulfillment of the promise, if we believe we receive, we shall have.

If the Bible is a revelation from Heaven, if there be a covenant of mercy, if there be virtue in the Blood of Christ, power in the Holy Ghost, and truth in God, we shall have the things we pray for, if they are what God has promised to give, and we believe we receive them when we pray.

Said a lady who was seeking the fullness of the Spirit, to her minister, "I am expecting the Lord will give it me." "When will He give it you?" was the reply. After a moment's pause, she answered, timidly, "I suppose He will give it me now." And instead of wasting her energy in repeated petition she at once definitely accepted the priceless gift. How many are in like manner expecting instead of accepting the gift of God? It is the duty of the Christian not to pray for the accomplished outpouring of the Spirit, but to accept the Pentecostal gift. Waiting is not the connecting link between our emptiness and need, and Christ's boundless fullness and all-sufficient supply, but appropriating faith or definite accepting, irrespective of all feeling. As we believe that we receive, God bestows, and then we have what our faith claims.

Some of my readers will remember how the late Samuel Coley describes the memorable service in which he accepted Christ as a Saviour from all indwelling sin. The Rev. Thomas Collins was the preacher. His text was, "Wilt thou be made clean? When shall it once be?" "Unction sweeter than was wont came down as he urged the query, 'When shall it once be?' Then he said, "The loving Father says, "Now;" what do you say?' 'Now,' breathed audibly from pew to pew. 'The Son, who gave His cleansing blood, says, "Now;" what do you say?' At this reiteration of appeal, 'Now' louder and more earnest circled me in answer. The waiting Sanctifier, the Spirit of Holiness, says, "Now;" what do you say? "When?" ' Twice the response, though it moved my inmost heart, had passed, leaving me silent; but with the third questioning came a gush of influence irresistible. I could keep my lips no longer, but, like the rest, cried, 'Now!' What is more, and better far, my soul that blessed moment as certainly said, 'Now,' as did my tongue. It was no flash of enthusiasm; it was a work of the Holy Ghost. That 'Now' stirs me yet. Nor ever since that memorable time has my faith dared to procrastinate, or say anything but 'Now' to all the sanctifying offers of the promise-keeping God."

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