



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16 from:

From: **ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION**

By **Rev. D. A. Whedon**

1. The Progress of Mr. Wesley's View

From the Scriptures he early formed an exalted standard of the Christian character. His sermon on "Circumcision of the Heart," in 1733, expressed all that he afterward taught under the name of Christian perfection, although he would have then "started at the word." But he knew not the way to attain it. He says: "*I was utterly ignorant* of the nature and condition of justification. Sometimes I confused it with sanctification; at other times I had some confused notion about the forgiveness of sins; but then I took it for granted the time of this must be either the hour of death or the day of judgment. I was equally ignorant of the nature of saving faith; apprehending it to mean no more than 'a firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments.' " -- Vol. 5, p. 80. In April, 1738, he saw from Scripture, and living witnesses, that conversion is an instantaneous work obtained by simple faith; and on May 24, he proved it in his own experience. "Till then," he says, "sin had dominion over me."

His opinion as to what constitutes Christian perfection underwent no change, although he had occasion to modify a few expressions in which he stated the doctrine. He saw clearly from this time that all grace, even in its highest degrees, is received by faith; and in this he never wavered. But he was "weak in the faith" and a "babe in Christ," as all young converts are. Doubts and fears crowded upon him. He *found it necessary to sit at the feet of those* who had more perfect knowledge of the way of faith.

Precisely when he saw that entire sanctification, as a distinct work, is offered by simple faith, we do not know. He says: "By viewing it in every point of light, and comparing it again and again with the Word of God on the one hand, and the experience of the children of God on the other, we saw farther into the nature and properties of Christian perfection." -- Vol. 6, p. 495. His mind grasped the details by slow degrees. He could not, by his clear general knowledge of the doctrine, see what a careful experience in himself and others -alone could teach. So, at a time when he "had no distinct view of what the apostle meant by exhorting us to go on to perfection," *two or three persons in London* gave him a very strange account of their experience, and "different from any" he had ever heard. It was, however, "exactly similar" to what he represents as entire sanctification.

The next year five or six more related to him the same experience. A few years after, he and Thomas Walsh met all in London who had the same experience, and "asked them the most searching questions (they) could devise." In 1759-1762, the witnesses of full salvation "multiplied exceedingly"; and "most of these" (in London alone were six hundred and fifty-two) he examined in the same manner (Vol. 2, p. 223).

The clear, uniform testimony of these, from first to last, gave him the necessary light by which to form opinions on many points, and to rectify those which were wrong. (you see the spirit of Wesley? He was diligently interviewing hundreds in the fear of God in order to better understand the work that God was accomplishing within them first hand! They were not slack concerning the faith!!!)

It will not, therefore, appear so strange that he should, in 1742, describe a very clear experience, and add: "Whether she was sanctified throughout, I had not light to determine." -- Vol. 3, p. 258. In 1744 he records another clear case, and says: "Why do I not rejoice and praise God on his behalf? Perhaps because I have an exceeding complex idea of sanctification, or a sanctified man." -- Vol. 3, p. 323.

The early "conversations" exhibit the doctrine with clearness, *but the details with a confusion and hesitancy* very different from the explicit utterances of later years. As light was received, it was used. "Those in whom the foundation is already laid we exhort to go on to perfection; which we did not see so clearly at first, although we occasionally spoke of it from the beginning." So he says in 1745 (Vol. 5, p. 200). Time, in like manner, disclosed clearly the successive steps of seeking this blessing, its true evidences, and the mode of retaining it. It was not till 1758 that he was convinced one could lose it; and he even then thought that when once lost, it could not be regained till near death. (not true. It can be regained the instant the soul reverses their mistake and lays it all down before Him in trust again. ES)

The great revival of holiness about 1760 furnished him abundant facilities for obtaining light.

After this time his language is always clear and explicit. He says many things which he did not say before, for he did not know them; but he does not contradict his former teachings in any material point. There is no reason to believe that his views changed at all after 1765. He died in 1791.



II. What Is Entire Sanctification?

Mr. Wesley variously, but clearly, answers this question. It "does not imply an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness." -- Vol. 1, p. 358. It is "the loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love." -- Vol. 6, p. 500. "It is nothing higher, and nothing lower than this – the pure love of God and man. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions." -- Vol. 6, p. 502. "The essence of Christian holiness is simplicity and purity, one design, one desire -entire devotion to God." -- Vol. 6, p.774. He defines it as experienced: "Many have (in 1761, at London) and many do daily experience an unspeakable change.

After being deeply convinced of (manifestations of the fallen nature), particularly of pride, anger, self-will, and unbelief, in a moment they feel all faith and love: no pride, no self-will, or anger: and from that moment they have continual fellowship with God, always rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks." -- Vol. 4, p. 111. "Till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was mixed. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride; he was meek, but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy or turbulent passion. His love of God was

frequently damped by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbor by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the will of God: now and then nature rebelled, and he could not clearly say, 'Lord, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' His whole soul is now consistent with itself; there is no (disharmonious theme). All his passions flow in a continual stream with an even tenor to God. There is no mixture of any contrary affections; all is peace and harmony. After being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it than of the beating of his heart; and continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, he rejoices evermore. And as he now loves God with all his heart, so Jesus now reigns alone in his heart, the Lord of every motion there." Vol. 2, p.222.

Rapturous joy, such as is frequently given in the beginning of justification, or of entire sanctification, is a great blessing; but it seldom continues long before it subsides into calm, peaceful love." -- Vol. 7, p. 46. And to aid in judging whether we have attained it, he observes: "Not that 'to feel all love and no sin' is sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification." -- Vol. 6, p. 505.



III. Regeneration Is Not Entire Sanctification

He says: "Sanctification begins in the moment a man is justified. Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout." -- Vol. 6, p. 496. Again: "There does still remain, even in them that are justified, a mind which is in some measure carnal (so the apostle tells even the believers at Corinth, 'Ye are carnal'); a heart bent to backsliding, still ever ready to depart from the living God; a propensity to pride, self-will, anger, revenge, love of the world, yea, and all evil; a root of bitterness, which, if the restraint were taken off for a moment, would instantly spring up; yea, such a depth of corruption as, without clear light from God, we cannot possibly conceive." -- Vol. 1, p. 119.

Further: "We may learn the mischievousness of that opinion, that we are wholly sanctified when we are justified; that our hearts are then cleansed from all sin. It is true, we are then delivered from the dominion of outward sin; and, at the same time, the power of inward sin is so broken that we need no longer follow, or be led by it; but it is by no means true that inward sin is then totally destroyed, that the root of pride, self-will, anger, love of the world is then taken out of the heart. At the very moment of justification we are born again; in that instant we experience that inward change from darkness into marvelous light; from the image of the brute and the devil, into the image of God; from the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. But are we then entirely changed? Are we wholly transformed into the image of Him that created us?

Far from it: we still retain a depth of sin, and it is the consciousness of this which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance to Him that is mighty to save. Hence it is that those believers who are not convinced of the deep corruption of their hearts, or but slightly, and as it were, (intellectually) convinced, and have little concern about entire sanctification." -- Vol. 1 p.124.

"The contrary doctrine is wholly new; never heard of in the Church of Christ, from the time of his coming into the world till the time of Count Zinzendorf; and it is attended with the most fatal consequences." -- Vol. 1, p. 115.



IV. How To Attain It

Mr. Wesley's views on this point exhibit no inconsistency, though they become more clearly defined after the commencement of the great revival. They may be stated briefly:

1. A deep conviction of depravity is necessary.
2. An entire devotion of the whole man to God's service, and a hearty obedience to his whole will.
3. Simple and direct faith, expecting it every moment.

The conviction "implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of wrath of God.

It does not suppose any doubt of the favor of God, or any 'fear that hath torment.' It is a conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the sin which still remains in our heart; of the carnal mind which 'does still remain even in them that are regenerate;' although it does no longer reign, it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of proneness to evil, a heart bent to backsliding; of the still continuing tendency of the flesh to lust against the Spirit; of the tendency of our heart to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry, and, above all, to unbelief; of the sin still cleaving to all our words and actions; of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought or to form one good desire." -- Vol. 1, p. 389.

When thus convinced, we must give ourselves unreservedly to the whole will of God, and at once and constantly hold ourselves "a living sacrifice." We must look for the sanctifying Spirit, "not in careless indifference or indolent inactivity, but in vigorous, universal obedience; in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily, as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God." -- Vol. 6, p. 505.

That is, in the path of duty we shall find it. But "all who expect to be sanctified at all, except to be sanctified by faith. Meantime, they know that faith will not be given but to them that obey. Remotely therefore, the blessing depends on our works, although, immediately, on simple faith." -- Vol. 6, p. 716.

Like justification, "it is not of works, lest any man should boast. It is the gift of God, and is to be received by plain, simple faith. Suppose you are now laboring to 'abstain from all appearance of evil,' 'zealous of good works,' and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is, then, only one point remaining. The voice of God to your soul is, 'Believe and be saved.'" -- Vol. 2, p. 224.

His enemies would have it that he taught that holiness was to be obtained by works. But he replies: "I have continually testified (for these five and twenty years,) in private and in public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And, indeed, the one of those great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith.

Faith is the condition, and the only condition of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification. No man is sanctified till he believes; every man when he believes is sanctified" -- Vol. 1, p. 388. "But what is that faith whereby we are sanctified? It is a Divine evidence and conviction, first that God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this there is no moving one step further. Secondly, that

what God hath promised He is able to perform. Thirdly, that He is able and willing to do it now. To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us now, there needs to be added one thing more: a Divine evidence and conviction that He doeth it. In that hour it is done: God says to the inmost soul, 'According to thy faith be it unto thee!' Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; it is clean 'from all unrighteousness.' "Vol. 1, p.390.

We find many illustrative facts. "Inquiring (in 1781) how it was that in all these parts we have so few witnesses of full salvation, I constantly receive one and the same answer: 'We see now we sought it by our works: we thought it was to come gradually: we never expected it to come in a moment, by simple faith, in the very same manner as we received justification?' **What wonder is it then, that you have been fighting all these years as one that beateth the air.**" -- Vol. 7, p.377.

He strongly urges all believers to look for full salvation now without regard to the time that has elapsed since conversion. "Every one, though born of God in an instant, yea, and sanctified in an instant, yet undoubtedly grows, by slow degrees, both after the former and latter change. But it does not follow from thence, that there must be a considerable quantity of time between the one and the other.

A year or a month is the same with God as a thousand. It is therefore our duty to pray and look for full salvation every day, every hour, every moment, without waiting till we have either done or suffered more. Why should not this be the accepted time?" -- Vol. 6 p. 764.

In the Journal we read: "Many (at Macclesfield) believed that the blood of Christ had cleansed them from all sin. I spoke to these (forty in all) one by one. Some of them said they received that blessing ten days, some seven, some four, some three days after they found peace with God, and two of them the next day." -- Vol. Iv, p. 135.

A remarkable instance is that of Grace Paddy, who was "convinced of sin, converted to God, and renewed in love, within twelve hours." -- Vol. 4, p.219.

Once more: "With God one day is as a thousand years. It follows that the quantity of time is nothing to Him. Centuries, years, months, days, hours and moments are exactly the same. Consequently He can as well sanctify in a day after we are justified as a hundred years. There is no difference at all, unless we suppose Him to be such a One as ourselves. Accordingly we see, in fact, that some of the most unquestionable witnesses of sanctifying grace were sanctified within a few days after they were justified." -- Vol.7, p. 14.

No wonder that he exclaims: "O, why do we not encourage all to expect this blessing every hour, from the moment they are justified;" -- Vol. 4, p. 451.

The question of its instantaneousness, Mr. Wesley meets with clearness. Speaking of the large numbers who entered into "the rest of perfect love" about 1760, he says: "Not trusting to the testimony of others, I carefully examined most of these myself; and every one (after the most careful inquiry, ***I have not found one exception*** either in Great Britain or Ireland) has declared that his deliverance from sin was instantaneous; that the change was wrought in a moment." -- Vol. 2, p.223.

But, "be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory." -- Ib. "As to the manner, I believe this perfection is always ***wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith***; consequently, in an instant." -- Vol. 6, p. 532, in 1767.

At another time he says: "Perhaps it may be wrought gradually in some; I mean in this sense, they do not refer to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously, that

the Lord should destroy sin by the breath of His mouth, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so He generally does; a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudiced person. Thou, therefore, look for it every moment! Look for it in the way above described; in all those good works whereunto thou art created anew in Christ Jesus. Look for it every day, every hour, every moment! Why not this hour, this moment?

Certainly you may look for it now, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, I must first be or do thus or thus. Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are; and if as you are, then expect it now. It is of importance to observe that there is an inseparable connection between these three points. Expect it by faith, expect it as you are, and expect it now! To deny one of them is to deny them all.” -- Vol. 1, p.391.



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