

JOHN WESLEY'S DESCRIPTION OF
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

In the year 1776, upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short proportions:

1. There is such a thing as perfection, for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to "go unto perfection" (Heb. 4:1).
3. It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. 3:13).
4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
5. It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body.
6. Is it sinless? It is not worthwhile to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin."
7. It is "perfect love" (1 John 4:18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, the rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (1 Thess. 5:16, etc.).
8. It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
9. It is amissible, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago.
10. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.
11. But it is in itself instantaneous or not?

In examining this, let us go on step by step.

An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers; none can deny this.

Since that change, they enjoy perfect love; they feel this, and this alone; they "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." Now, this is all I mean by perfection; therefore, these are witnesses of the perfection which I preach.

"But in some this change was not instantaneous." They did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies; yet there is an instant in which life ceases. And if even sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it.

"But if they have this love now, they will lose it." They may; but they need not. And whether they do or not, they have it now; they now experience what we teach. They are all love; they now rejoice, pray, and praise without ceasing.

"However, sin is only suspended in them; it is not destroyed." Call it which you please. They are all love today, and they take no thought for the morrow.

"But this doctrine has been much abused." So has that of justification by faith. But that is no reason for giving up either this or any other scriptural doctrine. "When you wash your child," as one speaks, "throw away the water; but do not throw away the child."

"But those who think they are saved from sin they have no need of the merits of Christ." They say just the contrary. Their language is:

"Every moment, Lord, I need the merit of Thy death!"

They never before had so deep, so unspeakable a conviction of the need of Christ in all His offices as they have now.

Therefore, all our preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers con-

stantly, strongly, and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it.—From Wesley's Plain Account.

THE LOST ART OF PRAYER

By Rev. Samuel Chadwick

The Scriptures speak of prayer as toil and labor. Prayer taxes all the resources of the mind and heart. Jesus Christ wrought many mighty works without any sign of effort. There was in his marvelous works the ease of omnipotence, but of his prayers it is said, "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." All who have shared his intercession have found it a travail of anguish. Great saints have always been mighty in prayer, and their triumphs have always been the outcome of pain. They wrestled in agony with breaking hearts and weeping, yes, until they were assured they had prevailed. They spent cold winter nights in prayer, they lay on the ground weeping and pleading, and came out of the conflict physically spent but spiritually victorious. They wrestled with principalities and powers, contended with the world rulers of Satan's kingdom, and grappled with spiritual foes in the heavenly sphere. A lost art! Prayer has become a soliloquy instead of a passion. The powerlessness of the church needs no other explanation and the counsellors of the church need seek no other cause. To be prayerless is to be both passionless and powerless.—Record of Christian Work.

HOLINESS

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—Hebrews 12:14.

In some religious circles we hear ridiculed the thought that holiness can be obtained in this present life. Sneering looks, and sarcastic statements are made about those who profess to be made perfect in love. They say, "How absurd to think that one can be perfect in this life, and who is there living that does not sin in some way or another." They pile mountain high as sins some of the weaknesses, and short comings of the saints. Despite all of their blatant remarks about the ten spies who brought back an evil report, God still has his holy courageous Joshuas and Calebs who go into Canaan and possess the Canaan Land of Perfect Love. Hallelujah!

Holiness is the state of the normal Christian. Dr. E. Stanley Jones says that Pentecost is the normal Christian experience. Extremists have done the cause of true holiness much harm and misunderstanding in reference as to what it consists. However, there are people in every evangelical denomination who have obtained this precious experience of heart purity, and daily exemplify the true spirit of holiness. There have always been misrepresentations about every true doctrine, yet the Lord has those who properly interpret the sacred Scriptures. Thank God for the National Holiness Association and its proper interpretation of Biblical holiness, and also their Gospel ministers who major on holiness. Likewise we are thankful to the Lord for every holiness church and association which is espousing the cause of holiness.

Holiness is the thread that binds us together; although we may not agree as to church polity, yet we do our best to adorn the

doctrine of Christ our Saviour in all things. Holiness is the hub of the wheel that holds the spokes together. Holiness is the Christian's heritage to be obtained by faith.

You ask, how can I obtain this experience? I answer by a classical statement from the book entitled "Christian Purity," by Rev. R. S. Foster.

"Holiness! Are you willing to receive it, with all its consequences of watchfulness, sacrifice, self-denial, and entire devotion of the soul and life to God? Not only are you willing thus to be freed from sin and to take responsibility of holiness, but are you desirous to do so? Is it the supreme wish of your heart? Are you willing in proof of your sincerity and preference to accept it in lieu of everything besides?"

"Still further, it is not only needful that you become willing and desirous upon the subject, but you must likewise come to the firm purpose and resolution that through grace you will be holy; that you will never rest short of this state; that at all hazards you will persevere, and never cease the effort until you attain. If you find it difficult to form the purpose—if there is discernible a remaining feeling that, if you should not immediately succeed, perhaps you may give over the struggle—pray and agonize for the victory here; never rest until your mind is determined. Nothing great can be accomplished without resolution. An 'unstable' or 'double mind' cannot prosper. Be firmly resolved, therefore, that you will contend for and claim your privilege—that you will attain."

Well says the hymn writer, Charles Wesley:

Holy, and true, and righteous Lord,

I wait to prove thy perfect will:

Be mindful of thy gracious word,

And stamp me with thy Spirit's seal.

Open my faith's interior eye:

Display thy glory from above;

And all I am shall sink and die,

Lost in astonishment and love.

Confound, O'erpower me by thy grace;

I would be by myself abhorred;

All might, all majesty, all praise,

All glory, be to Christ my Lord.

Now let me gain perfection's height;

Now let me into nothing fall,

As less than nothing in thy sight,

And feel that Christ is all in all.

—Christian Witness

HIS RELIGION CHANGED HIS WORDS

A story was told me by a clergyman on the Tyne of a conversion in his parish which he heard of through the big lad's mother. The mother said, "You know I'm a widow and not very strong, and my oldest boy goes to work every day, close to home, and comes in to dinner. He used when he came in to dinner, if I had not got it quite ready, to turn round and abuse me. But you know, there was the Mission in the parish, and somebody persuaded him to go, and somehow or other, God got hold of him; and now he still goes out to work, and he still comes in to dinner, and still I am not always able to have it ready; but now he looks at me ever so brightly, and he says, 'Mother, shall I help you to get it ready?'" Now God was in those words. They were not about angels and archangels and the company of heaven; they were about dinner and mother. But God was in them.—Bishop Moule.