

THE WESLEYAN DOCTRINE OF  
SANCTIFICATION

As defined by Rev. Daniel Steele

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit begun in regeneration by the inspiration of love in the heart. Love, the element in which purity exists, is not at first perfect, because it finds inward antagonisms in the form of evil-controlled propensities, "the flesh lusting against the spirit." The result of this collision of lingering depravity in the normal believer who clings to Christ by faith is not only freedom from condemnation, but a steady advance toward the extinction of the hereditary tendency toward sin and a longing desire for perfect assimilation to divine holiness. He aspires to a state where he perfectly hates what God hates, and perfectly loves what God loves. If he diligently studies the Holy Scriptures he will find abundant grounds for faith that it is not only his privilege but also his duty to receive the full heritage of the believer in Christ.

1. Grounds for Faith. The grounds are the command to be holy, the promise of entire cleansing by the Holy Spirit and in the prayers, especially the Pauline prayers, for the entire sanctification of believers addressed in the epistles (2 Cor. 7:1, I Thes. 5:23). The Word of God contains a variety of other terms teaching this doctrine, such as holiness, perfect love, perfection, the abiding fullness of the Spirit, and cleansing from all unrighteousness.

2. Dependent upon Absolute Self-Surrender. The faith requisite to the attainment of this grace must be attended by a complete and irreversible self-surrender and consecration to God of our good things. In the submission made by the penitent seeker of pardon, only his evil things are surrendered, just as a conquered enemy grounds the weapons of his rebellion before he so loves his country as to enlist in her armies.

3. Culminating in an Instantaneous Operation. Wesley taught that progressive sanctification culminates sooner or later in an instantaneous crisis completing the process. After that event there is an endless progress in the development of the inward principle of holiness in the outward life. The negative work, the destruction of sin, ends when the tendency of evil is entirely removed. Love, the positive element in sanctification, has no limit in this world, or in the word to come. The only perfection of which we are capable in this life is in pure or perfect love, which consists with many involuntary infirmities and defects marring the character. These constantly require the need of the atonement. They prompt the entirely sanctified soul to cry out continually,

"Every moment, Lord, I need  
The merit of Thy death."

4. The State Defined. There is no state of grace independent of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the gift procured by the atoning merit of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Hence the possibility of the moral downfall of the most saintly soul while in a probationary state. Perfected holiness does not exempt from temptation, but it so clarifies the vision as to afford an easy victory over sin, however disguised. (Heb. 5:14). While it stimulates the intellect, it adds no new aptitude to the mental faculties. It greatly intensifies Christian zeal and multiplies a person's usefulness, although it may not impart those qualities

which will make him an eloquent preacher or a famous evangelist. But the cessation of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit intensifies the powers in efforts for the good of others, and answers the prayer of —

"A heart of leisure from itself  
To soothe and sympathize."

5. The Evidence. The evidence of entire sanctification is the Spirit-illuminated consciousness of perfect purity of heart—the Spirit shining on His own work (I Cor. 2:13). This can be an evidence only to the believer. Others should receive his testimony if it is corroborated by the fruits of holiness, deadness unto the world, abhorrence of sin, and deep spirituality transfiguring the entire character.

6. Should Entire Sanctification be Professed? Methodism says, Yes, but in great modesty, "with meekness and fear," lest others should interpret the act as indicative of spiritual pride. It should always impress the hearer that this high profession is made for the glory of God, who has provided this uttermost salvation, and for the benefit of believers, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The name of the Great Physician should be known. The healed should proclaim Him to the sick.

7. A Distinctive Wesleyan Doctrine. Wesley styled entire sanctification, "The grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists: and, for the sake of propagating this chiefly, He appeared to have raised us up." It is firmly established in their standard theology and hymnology, and in the hearts of a minority of their members. All their ministers are required to be examined in a booklet entitled, "Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection," and to answer at the door of conference this question, "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?"—Selected.

## FRANCES WILLARD'S SANCTIFICATION

In 1866 Mrs. Bishop Hamline came to our village, and we were closely associated in the work of the "American Methodist Ladies' Centennial Association" that built Heck Hall. This saintly woman placed in my hands the "Life of Hester Ann Rogers," "Life of Carvosso," "Life of Mrs. Fletcher," Wesley's "Sermons on Christian Perfection," and Mrs. Palmer's "Guide to Holiness." I had never seen any of these books before, but had read Peck's "Central Idea of Christianity," and had been greatly interested in it. I had also heard saintly testimony in prayer meeting, and, in a general way, believed in the doctrine of holiness. But my reading of these books, my talks and prayers with Mrs. Hamline, that modern Mrs. Fletcher, deeply impressed me. I began to desire and pray for holiness of heart.

Soon after this Dr. and Mrs. Phoebe Palmer came to Evanston as guests of Mrs. Hamline, and for weeks they held meetings in our church. This was in the winter of 1866; the precise date I cannot give. One evening, early in their meetings, when Mrs. Palmer had spoken with marvelous clearness and power, and at the close those desirous of entering into the higher Christian life had been asked to kneel at the altar, another crisis came to me. It was not so tremendous as the first, but it was one which solemnly impressed my spirit. My dear father and a friend, whom we all loved and honored, sat between me and the aisle—both Christian men and greatly rever-

enced by me. My mother sat beyond me. None of them moved. At last I turned to my mother (who was converted and joined the church when she was only twelve years old), and whispered, "Will you go with me to the altar?" She did not hesitate a minute, and the two gentlemen moved out of the pew to let us pass, but did not go themselves. Kneeling in utter abandonment, I consecrated myself to God anew.

My chief besetments were, as I thought, a speculative mind, a hasty temper, a too ready tongue, and the purpose to be a celebrated person. But in that hour of sincere self-examination I felt humiliated to find that the simple bits of jewelry I wore, gold buttons, rings and pins, all of them plain and "quiet" in their style, came up to me as the separating cause between my spirit and my Saviour. All this seemed so unworthy of that sacred hour that I thought at first it was a mere temptation. But the sense of it remained so strong that I unconditionally yielded my pretty little jewels, and great peace came to my soul. I cannot describe the deep welling up of joy which gradually possessed me. I was utterly free from care I was blithe as a bird that is good for nothing except to sing. I did not ask myself, "Is this my duty?" but just intuitively knew what I was called upon to do. The conscious, emotional presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit held me. I ran upon His errands "just for love." Life was a halcyon day. All my friends knew and noticed the change, and I would not like to write down the lovely things some of them said to me; but they did no harm, for I was shut in with the Lord.—Selected.

## A TEACHER'S PRAYER

I ask Thee for a sure and certain skill,  
A patient and a consecrated will.  
I ask Thee for a white and perfect dream,  
A vision of the deep and wide unseen,  
Dear Lord, I need these things so much, so  
much—  
A youth lies plastic to my touch!  
I ask Thee for a love that understands  
When it should reach and when withdraw its  
hands;  
A selflessness that flings the locked door wide,  
For youth to enter while I step aside.  
Dear Lord, I need these things, so much, so  
much—  
A human soul lies plastic to my touch!  
—Eleanor B. Stock

## STRENGTH FOR TODAY

Strength for today is all we need,  
There never will be a tomorrow;  
For tomorrow will prove but another today,  
With its measure of joy and sorrow.  
Strength for today—what a precious boon  
To the weary hands that labor,  
To the loving hands that minister  
To the needy friend or neighbor.  
Strength for today, that our precious youth  
May happily shun temptation,  
And build from the rise to the set of the sun  
On a strong and sure foundation.  
Strength for today is all that we need—  
There never will be a tomorrow;  
For tomorrow will prove but another today,  
With its measure of joy and sorrow.  
—Selected