

WESLEY ON SANCTIFICATION As a Second Work of Grace

The "Holy Club" was formed at Oxford, England, in 1729, for the sanctification of its members. The Wesleys there sought personal purification by prayers, watchings, fastings, alms, and Christian labors among the poor. George Whitefield joined them for the same purpose; he was the first to become "renewed in the spirit of his mind," but not until he had passed through a fiery ordeal nor until he had spent whole days and weeks prostrate on the ground in prayer, and was saved at last by laying hold on the cross by a living faith, receiving an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith. He was "hooted" and pelted with missiles in the streets by his fellow students, but was preparing meanwhile to go forth, a sublime herald of the new "movement," a preacher of Methodism in both hemispheres, the greatest preacher, it is probable, in popular eloquence of all the Christian ages.

John and Charles Wesley continued the ineffectual ascetic struggle, poring over the pages of the "Imitation," and the "Holy Living and Dying." In all things "living by rule," fasting excessively, and visiting the poor and the prisoners. They found no rest to their souls, untroubled as yet by any dogmatic questions, but seeking only spiritual life. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," is the cry of the Wesleys' spirits, but still they find it not.

The two brothers determine to seek it in the wildness of the new world—to "for-sake all," and become missionaries to the colonists and savages and perish, if need be, for their souls. They accompanied Gen. Oglethorpe to Georgia, and on the voyage they witnessed the joyous faith of the Moravian peasants and artisans in the perils of the storm. They were convinced that they themselves had no such faith. They questioned the Moravians and got improved views of the spiritual life, but still groped in the dark. They learned more from the Moravian missionaries in the colonies but sank into deeper anxiety. They preached and read the Liturgy every day to the colonists and taught their children in the schools. They fasted much, slept on the ground and refused all food except bread and water. John went barefooted to encourage the poor children who had no shoes. The colonists recoiled from their severities, and the Wesleys returned to England, defeated.

As they sighted land on the return voyage John writes in his journal: "I went to America to convert Indians, but oh, who shall convert me? Who is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?" He met the Moravians again in London where they maintained religious meetings in private houses. Both the Wesleys turned away from St. Paul's Westminster Abbey and the dead churches, and sought light from heaven in these humble Moravian assemblies.

They became associates of Peter Bohler, a Moravian preacher and later a Moravian bishop. He was a man of learning from the University of Jena, who in good Latin conversed with them on divine subjects. John began to cleave to his teachings, and to him. This godly Moravian expounded unto him faith, justification by faith, and sanctification by faith. He began to "see the promise, but

it is afar off." Bohler said, "He wept bitterly while I was talking upon this subject, and afterward asked me to pray with him. I can freely affirm that he is a poor, broken-hearted sinner, hungering after a better righteousness." Thus prepared, Wesley attended a Moravian meeting and heard Luther's "Preface to the Epistle to the Romans" read, and the truth broke upon his mind. He writes: "I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." And Charles Wesley had, three days before, experienced the same change.

The very next month John Wesley preached "Salvation by Faith" before the University of Oxford. He had begun his career. The churches of London were startled by his sermons.

"What was the rise of Methodism?" asked Wesley in his conference of 1765. He answered, "In 1729 my brother and I read the Bible; saw inward and outward holiness therein; followed after it, and incited others to do so. In 1737 we saw this holiness comes by faith. In 1738 we saw that we must be justified before we are sanctified. But still, holiness was our point: inward and outward holiness. God then thrust us out to raise up a holy people." (Stevens' History of American Methodism).

John Wesley's personal testimony and statements of doctrine:

"Many years since, I saw that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. I began by following after it. Ten years after, God gave me a clearer view than I had ever had before, how to obtain it, namely, by faith in the Son of God; and immediately I declared to all, We are saved from sin, we are made holy by faith. This I testified in private, in public, and in print, and God confirmed it by a thousand witnesses" (from a letter, 1771).

Again in 1761-63 Mr. Wesley wrote to two of his preachers: "You have over and over denied instantaneous sanctification, but I have known and taught it above these twenty years. I have continually testified for these twenty and five years in private and public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. It is the doctrine of St. Paul, St. James, St. John and St. Peter, and no otherwise Mr. Wesley's than it is the doctrine of any who preaches the pure and whole gospel. I will tell you as plainly as I can speak just where and when I found this. I found it in the oracles of God, in the Old and New Testaments, when I read them with no other desire or view than to save my soul.

"Therefore, let all of our preachers make it a point to preach perfection to believers constantly, strongly, and explicitly. I doubt not we are not explicit enough in preaching full sanctification either in public or private." (Vol. VI., p. 529, Wesley's Journals).

In 1766, to his brother Charles, "Insist everywhere on full salvation received by simple faith. Press the instantaneous blessing."

Mr. Wesley has been accused of giving up this doctrine seven years before his death, which occurred in 1791. If so, nothing should have fallen from his pen or lips after 1784; but in 1785 he wrote this, "It will be well, as soon as any of them find peace with God, to exhort them to go on unto perfection. The more you press all believers to aspire after full salva-

tion as obtainable now by simple faith, the more the whole work will prosper."

In 1789, "Above one I preached to another very serious congregation in town, whom therefore I exhorted to leave the first principles, and go on to perfection."

One year before his death, 1790, "I am glad Brother D—has more light in regard to full sanctification. This doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of propagating this chiefly, He appears to have raised us up."

Three months before his death, in 1791, "A man that is not a thorough friend of Christian perfection can easily puzzle others and thereby weaken, if not destroy, any select society. * * * Whenever you have an opportunity of speaking to believers, urge them to go on to perfection; spare no sins, and God, even our own God, shall still give you His blessing."

Four days before he died, "We must be justified by faith, and then go on to full salvation."—Selected.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

R. Barclay Warren

A Scripture that is widely misunderstood is the reference to a peculiar people: "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, and zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14). The expression "peculiar" is often used implying a less than average intelligence on the part of true Christians. The implication is one who—as the prodigal—has come to himself and come to God.

"Peculiar" is derived from a Latin word meaning "belonging exclusively to." The Revised version brings out the meaning,—"purify unto himself a people for his own possession."

The expression was first used with respect to the descendants of Abraham. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Ex. 19:5). "The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). Then Paul applies the expression to the church or called-out ones who are redeemed and purified by faith in the offering of Christ.

We who have found forgiveness of sins and cleansing from the impurity of our heart are a people for His own possession. We are Christ's peculiar treasure and we shall go to be with Him in that day when He makes up His jewels. (Mal 3:17).

It is a great privilege and honor to be one of God's peculiar people. But it is not an exclusive privilege. Jesus Christ tasted death for every man—so you, too, may be one of His.

"JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING"

Light after darkness, gain after loss,
Strength after weakness, crown after cross;
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears,
Home after wandering, praise after tears.

Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain,
Sight after mystery, peace after pain;
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast,
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last!

Near after distant, glean after gloom,
Love after loneliness life after tomb;
After long agony, rapture of bliss—
Blest was the pathway leading to this!

—Frances Ridley Havergal