

24

HOLINESS  
LEGACY SERMONS

*Compiled by*

DR. LOUIE BUSTLE

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Compiled by Louie E. Bustle

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## Introduction

The Bible is a holy book inspired by the Holy Spirit, to instruct God's people in answering the call of a holy God to be a holy people. "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do" (1 Peter 1:15). The message of heart holiness is a defining theme of the Wesleyan tradition. From the platforms of its earliest camp meetings to the classrooms of its most recent church plants, the message has been and always will be a message of heart purity and Spirit-filled living.

These *24 Holiness Legacy Sermons* (and outlines) come from the hearts and minds of pastors, educators, and denominational leaders who bear the embers of flames that burned first within leaders and mentors before them. They will be valuable sermon or lesson starters for your own understanding or use as you faithfully live and proclaim the holiness message to a world searching to live above the selfishness and sin of its cultures.

They are presented by The Holiness Legacy Initiative, a strategic partnership bringing together denominations that share a historic commitment to spread the message of scriptural holiness. The Holiness Legacy movement is taking definite steps to help the church reclaim the message of Christian holiness. The goal is to help Christians understand, experience, live, and communicate the message of the deeper life in Christ.

- Louis E. Bustle, Holiness Legacy Ministries

## 24 Holiness Legacy Sermons

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## PART ONE SERMON OUTLINES

### 1. SANCTIFICATION - STAN TOLER

#### Hebrews 13:12

*"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood."*

Sanctification is a scriptural term. The words sanctify, sanctified and sanctification can be found 164 times in the Bible.

(See Addendum: "Article X," *The Church of the Nazarene Articles of Faith*)

#### 1. Why Should I Be Sanctified? (Ephesians 5:18)

"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

"To sanctify means to: 'make holy' or 'to be cleansed.' Sanctification is the completion of the work begun in regeneration."

—H. Orton Wiley

##### a. It is God's provision for us (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

"It is God's will that you should be holy; that you should avoid sexual immorality."

##### b. It is needed because of carnality (1 Corinthians 3:3).

"You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?"

##### c. It deepens our understanding of God (1 Peter 1:13-16).

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"

##### d. It gives us living and dying grace (Revelation 20:6).

"Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."

##### e. It helps us to live clean in an unclean world (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

##### f. It gives us a hopeful heart (Romans 5:5).

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

"Sanctification is more than dying grace, it is living grace."

—John Wesley

#### 2. When Should I Be Sanctified? (2 Corinthians 7:1)

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

##### a. When you feel convicted of the need (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

**Illus:** The Holy Spirit moves us to the point of need.

##### b. When you are willing to release your faith (1 Peter 5:8-10).

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist

him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

### 3. How Long Will It Take for Me to Be Sanctified?

- a. No longer than it takes you to hear this message!
- b. No longer than it takes for you to make a covenant with God.
- c. No longer than it takes to trust Christ to cleanse your heart right now.

### 4. What Are Some of the False Teachings about Sanctification?

**Myth No. 1. It will take away your power to choose.**

**Myth No. 2. It will exempt you from temptation.**

**Myth No. 3. It will destroy your humanity.**

**Myth No. 4. It will give you full Christian maturity.**

*Illus:* Purity vs. maturity.

### 5. How Can I Be Sanctified?

- a. Decide to seek the blessing.
- b. Submit wholly to the will of God.
- c. Walk in the light of holiness.

“The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

*Stan Toler is a General Superintendent of The Church of the Nazarene and author of nearly 100 inspirational books.*

## 2. HOLINESS AND ATTITUDES - STAN TOLER

### Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The apostle Paul was right when he urged us to bring all of our thoughts into captivity and to abandon the practice of conforming the way we think to the low level of the world around us. Be transformed!

#### 1. Give God Control of Your Mind (Philippians 4:6-7).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

##### a. Fix – Challenge your mind (Romans 12:2).

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

##### b. Filter – Influence your mind (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

##### c. Form – Surround yourself with positive people (Hebrews 12:1).

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Charlie Tremendous Jones — “You are today what you will be five years from now, except for the people you meet and the books you read.”<sup>1</sup>

##### d. Feed – Fill your mind with the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 28:8-10).

#### 2. Shine God's Light on What Is Right (Philippians 2:5).

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . .”

*Illus:* “You can see darkness or light. I've always chosen light.”

(Statement modified and adapted from the book by Tom Rath and Donald Clifton titled *How Full Is Your Bucket?* They say when you choose to fill other people's buckets and develop the go-give attitude you will in turn fill your own.)

- a. **Replace anger with love.**
  - b. **Replace fear with faith.**
  - c. **Replace judgment with acceptance.**
  - d. **Replace sadness with happiness.**
3. **Allow God to Change You (Philippians 4:8).**

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

- a. **Reverse the way you get out of bed (Psalm 19:14).**

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."

- b. **Say, "I love you" often (1 John 3:1).**

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

- c. **Become a giver instead of a taker! (Luke 6:38)**

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

"The hidden secret of a happy life is unselfishness."

—Chuck Swindoll

- d. **Focus on the future.**

**Illus:** Mark Hansen (age 57) and Art Linkletter (age 94) tell us that "age sixty has truly become the new age 40 – the prime of life when our careers are in full swing, our minds are at their most creative, and our passions burn their hottest."<sup>2</sup>

C. F. Kettering said, "My interest is in the future, because I'm going to spend the rest of my life there."<sup>3</sup>

Brian Tracy recommends: “Spend 80 percent of your time focusing on the opportunities of tomorrow rather than the problems of yesterday.”<sup>4</sup>

*Stan Toler is a General Superintendent of The Church of the Nazarene and author of nearly 100 inspirational books.*

### 3. REDISCOVERING HOLINESS - STAN TOLER

#### Matthew 5:48

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

“The devil does not need to make atheists of us in order to win the day. He only needs to remove the idea of the holiness of God from our platforms, bookshelves and seminaries and we will make atheists of ourselves.”

— Steve DeNeff

Holiness is not an option. 1 Peter 1:15-16: “He who calls you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, be holy, for I am holy” (NKJV).

#### 1. Whatever Happened to Holiness? (Hebrews 13:12)

“And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.”

- a. **Lack of absolute truth.**
- b. **Lack of biblical preaching on sin.**
- c. **Lack of commitment to the mission.**
- d. **Lack of Christ-centered churches.**

“The holiness of God is His intrinsic and transcendent purity, the standard of righteousness to which the whole universe must conform. God does not conform to any other standard. He is the standard.”

— Tony Evans<sup>5</sup>

“Holiness is the everyday business of every Christian.”

— Chuck Colson<sup>6</sup>

#### 2. How Do We Recapture the Holiness Message? (Revelation 1:17)

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.’”

##### a. **Recognize our unworthiness (1 John 1:5).**

“... in him is no darkness at all.”

“... the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.” (Isaiah 6:3-4 NIV)

“‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.’” (Isaiah 6:5 NIV)

His holiness is incomparable. Ezekiel 1:28 – “. . . I fell on my face . . .” (NKJV).

##### b. **Repent of our sinfulness (Luke 5:8).**

“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”

##### c. **Seek heart purity (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).**

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

##### d. **Return to the Spirit-filled life (Ephesians 5:1-7).**

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the

kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them."

**e. Commit to separated living (Leviticus 11:44-45).**

"I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."

**f. Glorify God for Who He is (Hebrews 13:12)**

"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood."

Deliverer

Justifier

Savior

Merciful

Forgiver

Righteous

Sanctifier

Awesome God!

Why is holiness so important?

- Because Christ died for it.
- Because it prepares us for heaven.

Hebrews 12:14: ". . . without holiness no man will see the Lord . . ."

*Stan Toler is a General Superintendent of The Church of the Nazarene and author of nearly 100 religious inspirational books.*

#### **4. THE TRUTH ABOUT SANCTIFICATION - STAN TOLER**

##### **Romans 6:19-22**

"I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."

- In the Old Testament, things were sanctified.
  - **The Tabernacle was sanctified (Exodus 40:9).**

"Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy."

- **The mountains were sanctified (Exodus 19:23).**

"Moses said to the LORD, 'The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, "Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy."'"

- **The nation of Israel was sanctified (Exodus 19:10-11).**

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.'"

- **First born children were sanctified (Exodus 13:2).**

"Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

- **In the New Testament people were sanctified (Acts 2:1-4).**

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the

Spirit enabled them.”

“If Jesus Christ is not Lord of all, He will not be Lord at all.”

—R. S. Nicholson

**1. Sanctification Is God’s Choice Gift for Every Believer ( 1 Thessalonians 4:3).**

“It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.”

**a. God’s will (Ephesians 1:4).**

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Jesus prayed for our sanctification (John 17:17)

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

**b. God’s command (Hebrews 12:14).**

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

**c. God’s provision (Hebrews 10:14-15).**

“. . . because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this.”

**d. God’s purpose (1 Thessalonians 3:13).**

“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”

## 2. Sanctification Is God's Holiness Imparted to Consecrated Believers (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

### a. It involves the forsaking of sin (Luke 14:33).

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

### b. It requires self-control and moral purity (1 Peter 1:15-16).

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"

### c. It demands devoted service (Luke 1:74b-75).

". . . to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

### d. It defeats wrong thinking (Romans 5:12-19).

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men,

because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

**Illus:** Deliverance from the carnal nature and inbred sin.

- Ephesians 2:3:

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

- Romans 8:17:

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

- Romans 7:24:

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

“We consecrate; God sanctifies.”

### 3. Sanctification Is Received Through the Prayer of Faith (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

#### a. It is a crisis experience and happens instantaneously (Acts 4:31).

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

#### b. It is achieved through obedient faith (John 14:11).

“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”

##### ■ 2 Corinthians 7:1:

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

##### ■ Romans 12:1-2:

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

#### c. It is fulfilled through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:16).

*“. . . to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”*

*Stan Toler is a General Superintendent of The Church of the Nazarene and author of nearly 100 inspirational books.*

## 5. THE POWER OF A CONSECRATED LIFE - STAN TOLER

### Hebrews 11:32-40

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

Hebrews 11 reminds the believer that God always honors those who honor him. While God does not promise to exempt his child from persecution, he does promise a marvelous reward for consecrated living.

#### 1. What Does Consecration Require? (v. 33)

*“. . . Who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions . . .”*

##### a. It requires a radical change of lifestyle (Luke 9:23).

“Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”

##### b. It requires the ultimate leap of faith (Hebrews 12:14).

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

##### c. It requires complete abandonment (Luke 6:46).

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

## **2. What Will Consecration Bring? (vv. 34-36)**

“ . . . quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.”

### **a. Inner peace (Isaiah 26:3).**

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

**Illus:** The best way to determine the depth of consecration is to watch Christian people under pressure.

**b. Inner sanctification (1 Peter 1:15-16).**

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”

“Christ does not always answer every question; He is the answer to every question.”

—Paul Martin

**3. How Is Consecration Modeled? (vv. 39-40)**

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

**a. A willingness to serve (Galatians 6:2).**

“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

**b. A willingness to sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).**

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

**Illus:** J. B. Phillips’ paraphrase, “Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.”

Luke 6:46 - “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Matthew 16:24 – “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

1) Voluntary – “present”

2) Personal – “bodies”

1) Sacrificial – “service”

Extreme devotion!

**c. A willingness to share (Acts 20:35).**

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

**Illus:** Acts 20:35 is the forgotten beatitude. Kingdom values do not reflect the hoarding, grabbing, and greedy attitudes of this world.

**d. A willingness to suffer (Colossians 1:22-23).**

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”

**Conclusion:** Be reminded of the words of Jesus:

Luke 6:27-31 – “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

*“We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.*

*“We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.*

*“And we pray that all unity may one day be restored,*

*“And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.*

*“Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”*

—Peter Scholtes <sup>8</sup>

6. THE HEART OF HOLINESS - JERRY BRECHEISEN

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Society has more “causes” than tennis shoes on a 100-voice centipede choir.

One hundred years from now, the cause of the soul will be more important than saving a seal, and the only tree worth anything will be the “old rugged” one.

God didn’t call us to be rich and famous. He called us to be holy, sanctified, set apart from the ambitions and affections of a dying world.

Holiness of heart and life are not an option like satellite radio in a Suburban. Rather God’s Word says, “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:15-16 NKJV). That’s getting to the heart of the matter.

Understand the simplicity of the holiness message: Holiness is the condition resulting from the action of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The desire for holy living is planted in us from birth but the life of holiness is released in us when we are sanctified.

See the heart of the holiness message in 2 Corinthians 5:21. If it was possible to live a life of holiness in Corinth, it’s possible to live it anywhere. Corinth was a cross between Hollywood and Las Vegas, with a touch of Bourbon Street thrown in.

Holiness is holy living motivated by a whole love for God and enabled by the Holy Spirit’s power.

1. The Heart of Holiness is Absolute Surrender to the Will of God.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

Our sin was laid on the sinless one, who was “tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15b). He is the sinless one who never committed a single deed that didn’t result in the welfare of another, who never disobeyed a single commandment of the law, who never whispered a single word of hatred about any living being, who never harbored a single unwholesome thought.

He laid aside the crown and took up the cross. His blood and sweat mingled on the ragged rocks of a place called Gethsemane where Jesus surrendered once and for all to the sovereign purpose of his Father in heaven. The provision of the cross includes holiness, not just forgiveness.

A life of holiness is absolute surrender – all that I know of myself to all that I know of God. Romans 12:1 – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” The Amplified Bible renders the same passage: “Make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice.”

The result is not perfection in our actions but perfect in our intentions.

**Illus:** The doctor asked his 90 year-old patient, “Do you suffer from arthritis?”

“Of course I do! What else can you do with it?”

Do you suffer with carnality, self-sufficiency, indecisiveness, and spiritual weakness? You can do something with it: take it to the cross and make an absolute surrender to the will of God.

## 2. The Heart of Holiness is Absolute Commitment to the Work of God

**Illus:** A missionary, who had served for 30 years in India, retired and returned to America. She was asked about her plans. She responded, "I'm still waiting on the Lord's direction. I know that it will be in some form of service. I would rather die than disappoint Him."

The sanctified life is a service-filled life. Go to any lengths to build the kingdom with the power tools of Pentecost. Acts 1:8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

## 3. The Heart of Holiness is Absolute Dependence on the Supply of God.

"So that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

**Illus:** An irate customer threw a piece of cloth on the counter, and said, "You call yourself 'A-1 Dry Cleaners.' Look at this!"

"Lady, there's nothing wrong with this lace."

"Lace? It was a shirt when I brought it in here."

The devil puts on glitzy commercials, but everything he touches looks worse at the end than the beginning. Broken, battered lives litter streets of his promises.

God made sure we had what we needed to do what he intended: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, . . . to redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people" (Titus 2:11, 14 NASB).

Christ is our righteousness, our right-ness. Our holiness doesn't hinge on the pins of something we do or don't do. We are made holy by something Christ has already done.

He is all our righteousness. We stand complete in him and worship him. Christ not only forgives and cleanses but also gives us provision to live like Him. 1 Corinthians 1:30 – "You are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

### a. He gives enough supply to make us loving.

Romans 5:5 – "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

### b. He gives enough supply to keep us clean.

A holy heart, filled with the Holy Spirit, doesn't have room for the world's trash. The Spirit-filled Christian, according to Paul, is a "new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24 NKJV).

### c. He gives enough supply to give you victory.

2 Corinthians 2:14-15a (MSG) – "In Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God."

The heart of holiness is absolute surrender, absolute commitment, and absolute supply.

J. Edwin Orr wrote:

"Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine;

Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;

Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;

I now surrender, Lord, in me abide."<sup>9</sup>

Have you held up the white flag of surrender to God – to his will, his work, and his supply?

*Jerry Brecheisen is an author and retired pastor who served as Director of Communications for The Wesleyan Church.*

## **7. LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE - JERRY BRECHEISEN**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:23**

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peter said, “These men are not drunk, as you suppose” (Acts 2:15a). Paul said, “Do not get drunk on wine” (Eph. 5:18).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, we see the three areas of our lives that are influenced when we are sanctified, when we bow at the altar of surrender to God.

#### **1. Our Devotion is Influenced.**

“May your whole spirit...be kept blameless . . .” The spirit is the only thing about us that lives forever. Everything else is gradually decaying.

The spirit is the part of us that we can offer back to God. On the cross, Jesus said to his Father, “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Paul said, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Rom. 8:16).

A sanctified Christian has settled the issue of ownership.

Peter says, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3).

**Illus:** The Welsh national anthem was sung at both Princess Diana's wedding and her funeral. It has some lyrics that describe the devotion of the sanctified heart:

“I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above, entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love. The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test. That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best. The love that never falters, the love that pays the price. The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice . . .”

#### **2. Our Desires are Influenced.**

“May your . . . soul . . . be kept blameless.”

Our very essence – our “me” or “you” – is affected.

Each one is unique. “There’s nobody else in the whole human race with our kind of style and our kind of grace,” the insurance jingle used to say. The experience of entire sanctification doesn’t erase that uniqueness, with all of its likes and dislikes. It enhances it.

We don’t lose who we are. We gain who Christ is—in us!

**Illus:** Two first-graders were playing basketball when a pretty little redhead from the third grade walked by. One of the basketball players suddenly stopped playing, rested the ball on his hip, and said to his buddy, “You know, Harold, when I stop hating girls, that’s the one I’m gonna stop hating first!”

That’s like a lot of our intentions. “When I stop doing this or that, that’s the first thing I’m going to stop doing.” But all our intentions are merely resolutions without the revolution of entire sanctification. John said, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4).

#### **3. Our Duty is Influenced.**

“May your . . . body be kept blameless.”

Entire sanctification doesn’t just affect our spirituality and our personality; it also affects our responsibility.

**Illus:** It doesn’t take very long standing in the front of a Vacation Bible School class of sixth grade students with world anarchy on their minds, to wish you had included the spiritual batteries.

Jesus made the provision for “Pentecost batteries” in our heart. He said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Notice “the witness” comes after the “when”—“when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” The “witness” without the “when” is a recipe for disaster.

**Illus:** Canning includes a process that cuts the bad from a fruit or vegetable, places the good fruit in containers that have been cleaned by boiling over the hottest of fires, adds a preservative to keep it from spoiling, and presents it to waiting diners for display and then consuming.

An evangelist came to the college I was attending for a spiritual emphasis week, and preached on surrendering your heart to Christ. When the altar invitation was given, my heart began to beat like someone was doing CPR from the inside out. I made my way to a crowded altar and asked God to sanctify me. The Spirit gently reminded me of some unwanted portions that needed to be cut away. I agreed and by faith submitted the container of my heart to the boiling fires of Pentecost. Minutes later, the God of heaven added the preservative and power of his Spirit into my heart. I rose to go back out into the dust and grime of the times, but no matter how much dust there was around me, a sweet purity and power had been sealed inside.

Has he washed your heart? Would you like him to do so?

1. Be sure you have been born again; the experience of holiness is only for the Christian.
2. Surrender all that you know of yourself to all that you know of God.
3. Ask him in faith to sanctify you—to give you a pure heart.
4. Make a claim by faith that he has done what he promised to do.

*Jerry Brecheisen is an author and retired pastor who served as Director of Communications for The Wesleyan Church.*

## **8. THE POSSIBILITIES OF LIVING A HOLY LIFE - RON McCLUNG**

### **1 Corinthians 1:1-3**

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul addresses the Corinthians as “those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (v. 2). The King James Version says, “called to be saints.” A Sunday school teacher asked her class to define “saints.” Thinking of the stained glass windows he had seen in church, one child said, “Saints are those whom the light shines through.” Not bad!

Yet who can claim to be a saint, to be holy in this wicked world? Much about the world is unholy. However, don’t let the harsh realities of all the bad things the world says and does blind you to the glorious possibilities of all that God can help you do and become!

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew words translated “holy,” “holiness,” or “sanctify” occur more than 800 times. In the New Testament, such Greek words occur nearly 300 times. Can we afford to ignore such a prominent theme in the Bible?

Like a reporter with a nose for news, let’s ask the what, why, who, when, and how questions.

#### **1. What is Holiness?**

In Isaiah 6:1-8, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. Holiness is:

##### **a. A separated life**

“I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted . . .” (v. 1).

##### **b. A sacred life**

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (v. 3).

##### **c. A serving life**

“Here am I. Send me!” (v. 8).

#### **2. Why Be Holy?**

##### **a. God’s instructions declare it.**

“ . . . be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44, 19:2, 20:26; 1 Peter 1:15).

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

b. **Personal integrity demands it.**

“What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11 KJV).

c. **Our interrelationships deserve it.**

“Be very careful then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil . . . be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:15-16, 18).

### 3. **Who Can Be Holy?**

a. **Those who are born again.**

When we are born again, our acts of sin are forgiven. But there remains the nature of sin and we must deal with that.

b. **Those who see the need.**

Isaiah saw the Lord and he saw himself.

c. **Those who desire it.**

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

d. **Those who pay the price.**

There’s a price to pay for everything, even holiness. True, Jesus paid the price: “And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood” (Hebrews 13:12). Yet, we too must pay a price: you cannot do some things and live a holy life. Some things are not consistent with the lifestyle God wants for us.

e. **Those who are obedient.**

Be obedient to the point of submitting for his cleansing and to be filled with his Spirit.

### 4. **When Can We Be Holy?**

a. **Some teach that we become holy after death.**

b. **Some think it happens at the time of death.**

c. **We believe we can be holy now.**

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

God calls us to “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 KJV). The NIV says, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

The Greek for “follow” and “make every effort” means “zealously pursue.”

### 5. **How Can We Be Holy?**

Some say God imputes his holiness, that he declares or reckons us holy because we are in Christ. Others say he imparts his holiness, that he actually does cleanse our hearts and make us holy. He cleanses the sin nature and purifies our hearts.

Those who believe in imputed holiness tend to say, “If I am not really holy and cannot be holy in this life, it’s OK because when God looks at me, he sees the holiness of Christ, not my sinfulness.”

Some truth exists in both sides. Our holiness is in Christ. Only in him do we find holiness. As we receive it from him, walk with him, live with him, and remain in him, we are truly sanctified, cleansed, made holy.

We can attain it now, but only in Christ. Just as you prayed and believed God to forgive you, you must pray and believe God to cleanse you and make you holy.

a. **Confess.**

b. **Surrender.**

c. **Believe.**

### 6. **How Holy Can We Be?**

When I was a young pastor and my son was three years old, we were preparing to go to church on Sunday evening. He followed me through the house, constantly asking questions. I stopped in the bathroom to brush my teeth. He followed, bombarding me with his queries. In frustration, I slammed the toothpaste tube down into the sink and said, “Will you please be quiet!”

The toothpaste tube split and squirted paste on my suit. I had to change clothes before going to church. That incident jarred me. The irony of it was that I was ready to preach to others, but I could not be kind to my own son. It was totally inconsistent with what I wanted to be. Why should a person who is filled with the Spirit fly off the handle and do dumb, irresponsible things?

It drew me to the Scriptures. I needed, at the very least, a fresh touch from the Lord. Through studying his Word, he seemed to show me: we can be cleansed and filled with his Spirit right up to the point of our knowledge and experience. At some point along the way, he may tap us on the shoulder again and remind us we are becoming careless. If we yield to him, he will once again cleanse us and fill us with his Spirit right up to the point of our knowledge and experience, keeping our relationship current with him.

Do you need a fresh touch? God is adequate. If you see the need, if you desire him, are willing to pay the price and be obedient, then confess, surrender, and believe. He will meet you where you are.

*Ron McClung is an author and former district superintendent who serves as Assistant General Secretary for The Wesleyan Church.*

## 9. THE CURE FOR SIN - *Norman G. Wilson*

**Illus:** Cartoonist Charles Shultz did not write in theology journals, but through his fictional characters, he wrote some practical theology in our daily newspapers. In one of them Lucy says to the timid Charlie Brown, “Do you know what your problem is Charlie Brown?” To which Charlie responds as he walks off in disgust, “No and I don’t want to know. Leave me alone.” But, as usual, Lucy has the last word. “Your problem is, you won’t listen to what your problem is.”

Charlie Brown is not the only one who refuses to acknowledge his problem; it is a symptom common to the human family. The fundamental problem in the human family, that which is the source of all other problems is SIN. Sin is basic and fundamental in the Word of God, and so is its cure. Until a man or woman acknowledges the problem of sin, they will never find the cure for sin.

John Wesley is reported to have said, “In every religion there is a principle truth or error, which like the first link of a chain, necessarily draws after it all the parts with which it is essentially connected. This leading principle in Christianity is the doctrine of our corrupt and lost estate.”

Since sin is our basic problem, salvation is our only cure.

### 1. Sin’s Definition

**a. Sin is lawlessness** - 1 John 3:4, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness”

**b. Sin is unrighteousness** - 1 John 5:17, “All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.”

**c. Sin is faithlessness** - Romans 14:23, “. . . everything that does not come from faith is sin.”

### 2. Sin’s Dangers

**a. Sin is dulling** - Hebrews 3:13, “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

**b. Sin is degrading**- Luke 15:14-16, “After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.”

**c. Sin is deadly** – Ezekiel 18:4, “For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.”

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

### 3. Sin’s Defeat

**a. Sin is defeated by Confession** - 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

**b. Sin is defeated by conversion** - 2 Cor. 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

**c. Sin is defeated by cleansing** - 1 John 1:7, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

**Illus.** Many people have sung about the cure for the basic problem without recognizing it. Augustus Toplady summed it up in one of our most beloved hymns,

*Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.  
Let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed,  
be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.*  
(Public Domain)

*Norman G. Wilson is an evangelist and author who served The Wesleyan Church as speaker of "The Wesleyan Hour" and General Director of Communications.*

## **10. The Effect of Pentecost - Norman G. Wilson**

***Acts 1:7, 8; Acts 2:1-4***

The Day of Pentecost is often ignored in many churches. It ought to be celebrated as enthusiastically as Christmas.

**Illus.** In one sense, Christ's coming was the birthday of our Salvation—the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world was laid, but it was in the fullness of God's time that He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, TO REDEEM. Likewise, Pentecost was the birthday of His Church—in God's time, He sent His Holy Spirit to empower His Church to spread the Message of Salvation around the globe.

Jesus taught the disciples about the promise of Pentecost: "On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 1:4-5).

The effect of Pentecost:

### **1. The experience of the Spirit's Presence – Acts 1:8a, "You will receive power."**

**a. Prophetic** - Acts 2:2, "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting."

Acts 2:16-17, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.'"

**b. Personal** - Acts 2:3, "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."

John 14:16-17, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

**c. Pervasive** - Acts 2:4, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 4:7, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

### **2. The essentials of the Spirit's power – Acts 1b, "When the Holy Spirit is come upon you."**

**a. Power in response to obedience** - Acts 2:1, "They were all together in one place"

John 17:18-19, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."

1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

**b. Power in relation to service** - Acts 2:4, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

### **3. The expression of the Spirit's performance – Acts 1:8c, "You will be witnesses."**

**a. Life-changing** – Acts 2:41, "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to

their number that day.”

**b. Life-directing** – Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

**c. Life-enhancing** – Acts 2:47b, “The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Our prayer ought to be like Charles M. Gabriel’s, as expressed in the words of the gospel song, *Pentecostal Power*:

*Lord as of old at Pentecost thou didst Thy pow’r display,  
with cleansing purifying flame, descend on us today.*

*For mighty works for Thee prepare and strengthen every heart,  
come take possession of Thine own and never more depart.*

*All self consume, all sin destroy! With earnest zeal endue;  
Each waiting heart to work for thee. O Lord our faith renew.*

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*Norman G. Wilson is an evangelist and author who served The Wesleyan Church as speaker of “The Wesleyan Hour” and General Director of Communications.*

## **PART TWO SERMONS**

### **1. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION - NELSON PERDUE**

#### **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (KJV).

The subject of perfection has been very controversial through the years. However, the word “perfection,” in one form or another, occurs too frequently in Scriptures to be dismissed by silence. While some have misrepresented this doctrine in its presentation, others have ignored it altogether. In his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley answers the question of how to avoid setting perfection too high or too low: “By keeping to the Bible, and setting it just as high as the Scripture does. It is nothing higher and nothing lower than this, the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.”<sup>10</sup>

Everything about this universe is precise and perfect, from the revolving of the moon around the earth and the earth around the sun, the ebb and flow of the tides, the night following day, and each season following the other in perfect order. “To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven” (Eccles. 3:1, KJV). Without the perfect laws of nature, the world would be in total disarray. If God operates with such perfection and precision in the natural realm, it is only reasonable to assume that He works just as perfectly in the spiritual realm.

There are various kinds of perfection:

- Absolute perfection that is attributed to God alone.
- Angelic perfection.

- Adamic perfection that was a part of creation before the fall of man.
- Resurrection perfection which Paul disclaims, but toward which he was pressing (Philippians 3:12).
- Christian perfection, which Paul claimed and was urging others to experience as a second work of grace (Philippians 3:15).

It is Christian perfection that we are concerned about in this message.

One could summarize John Wesley's view of Christian perfection thusly:

1. There is such a thing as Christian perfection.
2. It is not so early as justification.
3. It is not so late as death.
4. It does not make men infallible.
5. It is perfect love.
6. It is improvable.
7. It is admissible.
8. It is instantaneous.
9. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.<sup>11</sup>

There is a present, possible perfection. Wesley further declared there is a difference between "one that is perfect, and one that is perfected. The one is fitted for the race, and the other is ready to receive the prize." The former is the perfection of righteousness, and the latter is resurrection perfection. For the purpose of this message I will consider Christian perfection as a crisis experience that is received instantly, followed by the perfecting or growth of that experience. It involves both purity and maturity.

### 1. Christian Perfection (Purity)

God is the abounding source of all perfection. He does perfectly everything He chooses or undertakes to do. He is holy, and He always acts in accord with His holy nature.

C. W. Butler says, "In creation, God has placed certain limitations on His own activities by entering into relations with other free moral responsible beings. When He chose to create mankind as responsible moral beings, He imposed upon Himself certain limitations as to the exercise of His power, conditioned upon the free choices of such moral subjects."

Man, through the misuse of his God-given freedom, fell from his holy estate into sin and was alienated from his Creator. God had already provided the means of atonement for such a tragedy according to Revelation 13:8.

Butler continues:

In the provision of grace and salvation, God exercised His own absolute freedom. However, in the bestowing of free grace to responsible free moral beings, He limits Himself in what He will do, by the freedom of the man, the receiving subject. In the provision of grace, He consults no one. In the bestowment of grace affecting the character and destiny of the recipient, He asks, "Wilt thou be made whole?" "If any man will, he shall know." "Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life." Therefore; let us consider that an absolute perfect God is able to do perfectly anything He undertakes to do, if He has an unhindered way. If man will respond obediently to His will to re-create him in His own image and likeness, He will make him "perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4 KJV). He can take out all that hinders, and impart all that is needful; in other words, He makes a perfect Christian. A thing can be said to be perfect when it is as it ought to be, when there is nothing wrong with it.

God planned in the beginning for man to be holy. In Ephesians 1:4 (KJV) we read, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Jesus provided for this on Calvary when he died on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His death and resurrection were provisions for man's forgiveness and cleansing.

Sin is twofold in nature. We read that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 KJV). His word also tells us that, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25b-26 KJV).

Therefore, his provisions were twofold, for the world's forgiveness and the church's cleansing. H. O. Wiley states that, "Christian perfection stresses the completeness of Christian character and the possession of spiritual graces." Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:48 (KJV), "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

This is why Wesley defined Christian perfection as love excluding sin. The aim and the end of it all are to make us Christ-like. The difference between Christian perfection and legal perfection is that legal perfection does not allow for mistakes, which are possible because of limitations of knowledge and faulty judgments that often occur through misinformation. Christian perfection allows for a margin between what a Christian is in his heart and motive and the method of his conduct. This is why, “every moment, Lord, I need the merit of thy blood.”

In Hebrews 13:20-21 (KJV), the writer says: “The God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” This perfection is qualification for the task that he wants us to perform. As sure as God calls the sinner to repentance, He calls His children to holiness.

**2. Christian Perfection (Maturity)**

Beginning in 2 Corinthians 6:14 through the end of the chapter, Paul acknowledges the believer’s need to separate from everything worldly and unclean. The Old Testament tabernacle/temple, its contents, and even the priests had to be holy. Anything identified with his earthly dwelling had to be holy.

Human beings, who are now God’s dwelling place on earth, must be a separated and a holy people. Righteousness has nothing in common with unrighteousness; there is no fellowship between light and darkness. J. B. Chapman once said: “Separation, not amalgamation is the prelude to power. When the church and the world walk hand in hand, it is always the church, never the world that loses its identity.”

In view of these promises, Paul admonishes us to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (7:1 KJV). Total consecration is the condition for one to receive entire sanctification, otherwise known as Christian perfection.

How are we able to cleanse ourselves, flesh and spirit? Is it possible and if so, how are we able to accomplish it? Paul S. Rees answers:

Actually, we cannot cleanse ourselves, but *conditionally, responsibly, and cooperatively*, we can. We cannot cleanse ourselves; but on the other hand, God cannot cleanse us without ourselves. The faith by which we are made holy is a moral act, and while it is performed by the aid of the Holy Spirit, it is so truly ours that God Himself is powerless to cleanse us without it. But when it is performed, God affirms to His holy people, “You have purified your souls in obeying the truth in the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:22 NKJV). This is further illustrated in Revelation 19:7 (KJV) when the church enters upon that mystic union with Christ in His coming glory and we read, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” Yet her readiness was not her own achievement, it was all of grace.

The latter part of verse 2 Corinthians 7:1 (KJV) speaks of maturity by the phrase, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It is a paradoxical statement. It seems to demand the perfection of something that is already perfect. While the tense of the word “cleanse” calls for a crisis act, something definite and decisive, “perfecting” is “ongoing” and will culminate one day in glory.

There is a divine and human side to perfection. God always does a perfect work, but the human side of this perfecting is continuous. As long as we live in this world, man can be made perfect in love and motive and have a perfect heart, but not a perfect mind or body. In David’s exhortation to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9 (KJV) he said, “know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.”

God’s work in the heart cannot be improved upon, but man’s work must be continuous, as we are a work in progress. Because of our faulty minds and infirm bodies, we will not be able, as long as we are in this world, to enjoy perfect performance or conduct. When God destroys carnality from the heart, He does not dehumanize us. While the propensity to sin is cleansed by the blood, it does not destroy the proclivities of our native appetites and passions. These must be disciplined and guarded with the utmost care.

We do this “in the fear of God.” The Psalmist says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10 KJV). In the discipline of our lives, we must be faithful in the study of the Word and prayer, and the means of grace. We need to be conscious of life’s providences and willing to accept reproof when given. We must remember that there is an after-work following the altar-work. Though we are cleansed from all sin, the aftermath of sin’s indwelling – scars and sin’s consequences and memories – are carried over into the Christ-like life. He forgives and forgets, but the world and Satan are not so generous. These must be refined and rectified by growth in grace or what we call “Christian maturity.”

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## 2. FREEDOM FROM SIN - NELSON PERDUE

### Romans 6:1-11

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

“For he that is dead is freed from sin.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. “For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (KJV).

Is it possible to be free from sin or are Christians just forgiven sinners? Must Christians continue sinning daily in deed, thought, and word? Paul answers these questions in the first verse of this chapter. In Romans 5:20 he writes, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (KJV). Paul knew there would be those who would try to misconstrue the purpose of God’s grace. Some said because God’s grace abounds more than man’s sin, the more man sins, the more God can display his grace. In other words, man’s sin would glorify God by causing his grace to increase.

Paul’s retort to such heresy was his rhetorical question in Romans 6:1-2 (KJV), “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” He puts to rest any teaching that there is such a thing as a ‘sinning’ Christian, any more than there is such a thing as an honest thief or a truthful liar.

#### 1. Liberty through Death (v. 7)

“For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

If God cannot save from all sin, then these words mock us. God never commands what He does not require, nor require of us where there is not ability to perform. Where there is a divine call, there is a divine enabling.

When Paul received his commission from Christ, it was that he would go to the Gentiles “that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18 KJV). Here in God’s commission to Paul we see two distinct works of grace and both received by faith.

Freedom from sin involves both justification and sanctification, and this is grace provided for the whole man and is sufficient for all sin. Each work of grace deals thoroughly with each specific form of sin. Justification deals with the deeds or acts of our sins, and entire sanctification deals with the disease or attitude of sin. The former requires forgiveness, and the latter requires cleansing by way of crucifixion.

When we are born of the Spirit (regeneration), through repentance and faith, all past transgressions are forgiven. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12 KJV). This involves the removal of guilt and the lifting of condemnation.

The joy and peace one receives from forgiveness is so welcome that often people believe they received it all at once. Later they discover stirrings in their heart that were not dealt with in the first work of grace. What they experienced was initial sanctification, but they soon finds that there is yet remaining in the heart what Paul calls “our old man” (Rom. 6:6 KJV). This requires another work of God’s grace called entire sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23) We inherit “our old man” as a result of the fall in the garden (Romans 5:18).

The phrase “our old man” indicates that we are very closely associated to it. One willfully submits to its mastery and like the ‘sap’ that flows from the vine to the branches, it spreads its virus throughout the entire personality running and ruining the entire life.

Man is not only a sinner by choice, but is sinful by nature. When one repents and receives forgiveness for his transgressions,

a new principle is introduced into one's heart that predominates the soul. The "old man" is arrested and "put down," but it is not yet "put off." It still remains, not by choice but by nature.

Between the two epochal experiences, regeneration and entire sanctification, God's grace is sufficient to keep one from sinning. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1: 7 KJV). However, subsequent to the New Birth, there must come a time when we reckon by faith the death of "our old man."

"Our old man" is not a substance or entity like an extraction of a tooth or the uprooting of a stump. We use these terms to teach total freedom from sin, but it is impossible to define a metaphysical by using a physical illustration.

However, when one has been delivered from the pollution and power of sin, one is not so fixed and complete in character as to be beyond temptation, or beyond any possibility of sinning. It does not remove any legitimate desire, appetite, or passion; it deals solely with the perversion by intrusion of that which is not of God.

There are those who would ask how one could ever be tempted to sin if he was free from sin? One only has to ask how Adam could be tempted or even how Jesus could be tempted. The real ground of temptation is man's freedom of choice with which God endowed him in creation, and he continues to have following salvation. He is as free not to yield as he is free to yield to temptation. Freedom from sin does not make one so he cannot sin, but so he need not sin. The same consecration that is required to be made free from sin must be continued in order for one to retain freedom from sin.

## **2. Life through Death (v. 11)**

"Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (KJV).

The apostle presents God's provision for man's deliverance from sin by the use of four verbs:

### **a. "Buried with Him by baptism into death" (v. 4).**

When James and John requested a special place in Jesus' kingdom, our Lord said, "Ye know not what you ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38 KJV). Water baptism is a symbol and pledge of his death, burial and resurrection, but Jesus was not speaking symbolically. He was speaking of the physical suffering and pain and the ultimate death on the cross. Out of His death on the cross came a resurrection three days later. In other words, out of His death came life.

### **b. "Planted together in the likeness of His death" (v. 5).**

Jesus said in John 12:24 (KJV), "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (KJV). He also says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.... every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:1-2 KJV)." Jesus taught, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:25 KJV) A grain put into the ground must die in order to spring forth in new life and produce an abundant harvest.

The words "planted together" speak of a harmonious union and fruitfulness. This 'oneness' is illustrated in the Old Testament. Workers went into the field to pluck the wheat and bind together into a sheaf and wave it up to God for a wave offering. They would then crush the grains into flour, knead it together, and bake it over the fire. Then they took the loaf and waved it to God for a wave offering. The oneness was represented by the sheaf and the loaf. When one is born again, he is separated from the world, but is united as a part of the body of which Christ is the Head. He then, like the loaf, will experience the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost. Through the birth of the Spirit and the subsequent baptism of the Spirit, one no longer is centered in himself, but centered in Christ. All residue of the self-life is purged out by the baptismal fire of the Holy Ghost.

### **c. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (v. 11).**

We appropriate all this by "reckoning" faith. The word "reckon" (count) means to consider a thing done. Experiencing the reality of being dead to sin and being raised in newness of life brings about a complete victory over death. It is a victory so complete that Paul says, speaking of Jesus, "Death hath no more dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9 KJV).

For the believer, being "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," is not speaking of the final resurrection of the body. It is rather victory over depravity ("the old man"), which is working death in us (Rom. 7:13) until we come to Christ to be crucified with Him, so that the body of sin and death be destroyed. The phrase "body of sin" is teaching that sin is not removed piecemeal, but all at once. We must reckon (count) this a reality in Christian experience so we will be filled with the Spirit and not with sin.

### **d. "Yield yourselves unto God (v. 13).**

“Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13 KJV). This can only be done by one who has been made alive unto God. While a sinner must turn and confess, a believer must consecrate and yield.

“Your members” speaks of the outer life. “Yourselves” speaks of the inner life. God wants us to be holy inwardly, having sincerity, integrity, and purity. He wants us to be holy outwardly, which we demonstrate in the things we do and in the way we treat others.

Once we were slaves to sin and our members were instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, now we are “dead indeed unto sin,” and being freed from sin, we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. There is moderation, control, and orderliness when He is the Master of our lives.

Haldor Lillenas had it right when he wrote:

*“Glorious freedom! Wonderful freedom!  
No more in chains of sin I repine!  
Jesus, the glorious Emancipator!  
Now and forever he shall be mine.”<sup>12</sup>*

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**3. SANCTIFICATION: THE WILL OF GOD - NELSON PERDUE**

**I Thessalonians 4:1-8**

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (KJV).

As we read the Scriptures, we are gripped with the fact that holiness is God’s designated standard for his people. In the text, we read that “God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness” (v. 7 KJV). In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (KJV) the writer, speaking to the brethren in Christ, tells them that “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” These passages, along with the third verse of the text, teach us that the call, the choice, and the will of God is that His children be holy.

In the New Testament alone there are sixteen commands to be holy, eighteen inspired prayers that we be made holy, fourteen passages teaching how to receive the blessing of holiness, and one hundred passages telling of the wonderful results of being made holy.

The verses of my text are given to the new Christian to emphasize that sanctification (the cleansing work of God in a believer’s heart) is begun immediately upon conversion and is necessary to live holy and righteous until and after they have been entirely sanctified, as is defined in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Sanctification (initial, entire and progressive) is the will of God and it is, in itself, an equation. The will of God is our sanctification, and our sanctification is the will of God. When one has been cleansed from all sin, namely inherited depravity, that which rivaled his reign is destroyed.

For the purpose of the furtherance of this message, I want to use the word “sanctification” in its entirety, unless otherwise noted.

**1. The Call of Sanctification**

“God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1Thess. 4:7 KJV). This calling is vastly more than an invitation; it is an investment of God, which the believer is highly honored to receive.

This call to holiness is subsequent to sonship: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1 KJV). It precedes the call to his eternal glory: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Peter 5:10 KJV).

The writer brings attention to the faithfulness of the God of peace who not only calls us but will accomplish our sanctification. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24 KJV).

The calls of God demand our response and our obedience to his calls, which assures our salvation. Many calls are given universally and generally and must not be ignored. There was:

**a. The call to safety**

"Come thou and all thy house into the ark" (Genesis 7:1 KJV).

**b. The call to reason**

"Come now let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18 KJV).

**c. The call to rest**

"Come unto me, all ye that labor . . . I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28 KJV).

**d. The call to repentance**

"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13b KJV).

My text issues a negative and positive note to His call: "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." This declaration places holiness in contrast to uncleanness.

When one hears the call of God and becomes knowledgeable of the will of God, it is then the act of highest wisdom to heed his call and do his will. The importance of his call is determined by one's concept of God who gives the call. When you study God's word, you will begin to get a picture of the character of God. When we consider his admonitions, exhortations, prayers and promises, we realize he is holy to the exclusion of all unholiness. Peter tells us, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15 KJV).

There is a warning given to those who would despise the call to holiness. To despise means to reject, refuse, undervalue this call. "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:8 KJV). Whatever estimate one places on the call to holiness is also one's estimate of God. The act of such rejection can only occur in this world because no one rejects holiness in heaven, and there is no holiness in hell to be rejected.

**2. The Cleansing of Sanctification**

Since God has given the clarion call to be holy, the fact that his will is a law commanding us to be holy, made the cross a necessity. Sinful man could never rise to the level of a law requiring holiness on his own merit. Man could do nothing to restore himself to the holiness lost in the fall. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 KJV). Isaiah 53:6 (KJV) says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." David in confessed, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5 KJV). The only sacrifice adequate to span the breach that sin has created and bridge the gap between man's guilt and God's glory was Christ Jesus. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:19 KJV). We are reconciled by his grace.

While sanctification means "setting apart," it has a deeper meaning. There is man's part and God's part in sanctification. The Christian is urged to make a full surrender to God subsequent to the new birth. The admonition of Romans 12:1-2 is for the Christian to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (KJV).

Obviously, that act of total consecration cannot be made by a sinner, but only by one who has been regenerated. He is the one who is able to offer himself a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. God's part is to cleanse or sanctify wholly. He will cleanse all we consecrate and purify all we present to him.

In the Old Testament, things such as vessels, temples, places, and days are sanctified or set apart from common usage to holy purposes. However, these have no moral capacity, because things, places, and days have no sense of good and evil. A person, a moral being, does know the difference between good and evil. Therefore, sanctification must mean more than a mere "setting apart" or dedication. It must involve the cleansing of man's moral nature.

Consecration or "setting apart" is an act that one can do of his own volition, even without a bleeding sacrifice. If sanctification does not mean more than dedication, then a person could be sanctified and at the same time hold God at a distance and refuse him from exercising his sovereign will over the person. It would be unthinkable that God would dedicate that person to any kind of sacred service without taking into consideration his moral condition.

It requires the efficacy of the cross to sanctify moral beings. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with

His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12 KJV).

### **3. The Conduct of Sanctification**

In the first twelve verses of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul speaks of the ethics that follow the experience of sanctification, both initially and entire. He states the importance of our lives’ being lived to God’s pleasure. “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess. 4:1 KJV).

Jesus, when speaking of his Father in John 8:29 said, “I do always those things that please him” (KJV). As we follow his example, we also should make pleasing him our chief objective in life. People who want salvation merely as a means to get to heaven are selfish. Their desire is for a place rather than a person, and whatever heaven is, it is because He is there. Let us abound in a pleasing walk with Him.

It will require holy discipline of our bodies so that we abstain from all evil passions such as fornication. Our body is the temple of His dwelling. He is Lord, and His supreme reign is the rule and will of our lives. We have proved that His will is good, and acceptable, and perfect.

The former life is over and all things have become new. Peter challenges his readers: “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Peter 1:14-15 NIV).

We do not defraud, cheat or lie, but rather live by the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt. 7:12 KJV). God taught us to love one another and love does no ill to its neighbor.

Paul speaks of another incentive to, “live soberly, righteously, godly in this present world,” and that is because we are “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12 KJV). His reign within is not only the hope of the Gospel, but our hope of glory.

Paul testified in Galatians 2:20: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” He was speaking of the “high noon” of holiness. Through His death and resurrection He gave himself a ransom for all. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV) that we are “bought with a price.” That price was the precious blood of Jesus. When we invite Him into our hearts, He comes to reign and no one can dispute his rights to us. If He cannot rule, He will not reside.

When one is sanctified wholly, carnality, the one insubordinate enemy to His law and rulership, is cleansed. This is the finished work of God’s will in the heart of his children. It is the crowning work of redemption, and Christ is all and in all. Paul clearly states that, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification . . . for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess. 4:3, 7 KJV). Let us not reject His call, but receive it gladly!

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## **4. CHRIST CRUCIFIED - NELSON PERDUE**

### **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (KJV).

When we study the life of Christ, we learn that His whole life was centered on the cross. In speaking of the cross he says, “For this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27b KJV). Oswald Chambers said, “The cross did not just happen to Jesus, He came on purpose for it.”<sup>13</sup> In this passage the apostle narrows the emphasis of his preaching to “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (v. 2).

#### **I. The Resolution: “I determined”**

Paul would not permit any other philosophical substitute of men to overshadow the crucifixion of Christ. He did not mean that there was nothing else to preach, but while some things are marginal, to Paul, Christ crucified was central. There is no atonement apart from Christ crucified and he states in 1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJV), “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is

Jesus Christ.”

He makes this clear in chapter one, as well, where he states in vv. 17-18, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel . . . lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross . . . is the power of God” (KJV). Again in vv. 23-24, “We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (KJV). He further proved this truth by the effect that his message had on corrupt Corinth. We read in Acts 18:8 (KJV), “Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized.”

It needs to be remembered that Paul came to Corinth following his encounter with the Athenians. While in Athens, he was stunned to see how that great center of culture, art, and education was saturated with idolatry. He disputed in the synagogues with the Jews and debated with the philosophers in the market place.

They brought him unto Areopagus, also known as Mars’ hill, where they “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21 KJV). Paul found an altar with the inscription, “to the unknown God,” and declared him unto them. When he finished his presentation, some mocked him, some took a pass, and said, “We want to hear you again on this subject” (Acts 17:32b), and a few believed.

I’ve often wondered in retrospect if Paul felt that he had appealed more to their intellect than to their heart. It seemed only by implication that he said anything about sin, the atonement, and the cross of Christ. We never read of any future visits to Athens, no letters written to the Athenians, nor was there any church established in Athens.

While this is mere conjecture on my part, one cannot but notice that following his experience on Mar’s hill, there seemed to be a shift in his preaching emphasis. We are admonished often today to be broadminded and tolerant in our preaching so as not to disturb or offend anyone. The preaching of the cross will always be an offence to some. In Galatians 5:11 (KJV), Paul asks, “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.” Paul suffered severely for preaching the cross.

When we realize the full implication of the cross, we will echo the words of Isaac Watts:

“When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

In Romans 3:23, Paul levels all men in a common category of demerit when he writes, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (KJV). All men everywhere are in need of a Redeemer, and the only effective ground upon which a sinner can meet God is the ground of the cross.

It was at the cross that justice and mercy embraced one another. On the cross, Jesus gave his life a ransom for many and paid the penalty for man’s sin. Through his death and resurrection he upheld the broken law and maintained the justice of God and now offers forgiveness and freedom for all who will come unto him.

It was our sins that made Christ’s death on the cross necessary. When we acknowledge our need and make such an admission, we will personally witness the power of the cross. That power that will pardon our guilt, purify our hearts, and reconcile us with God and heal the breach brought about by our sins.

## **2. The Revelation: “Know Christ”**

The good news is that Jesus Christ is knowable. The Christian faith is not a creed, it is a Christ; it is not a somewhat, but someone, Jesus, the Son of God.

Many had their opinions about him. Many knew him as the carpenter’s son, and that his mother’s name was Mary, and his brothers were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. And they knew his sisters (Matthew 13:55-56).

The scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, had their opinions of him. They said that he was an imposter and that he deceived the people. They even accused him of casting out devils “by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils” (Matt. 12:24 KJV).

The Jewish rabbis like Nicodemus saw him as a great teacher, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God” (John 3:2 KJV). Many thought that he was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. People held many and varied opinions as to who he was.

Peter, the spokesman of the disciples said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Jesus knew that was a revelation that could only come from God and said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven . . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:17-18 KJV).

While Paul was a master teacher when it came to Christian doctrine, the centrality of his preaching was not doctrine, but a person. It was said of Paul that he had an obsession with Christ because He lived, served, suffered, and died for Him. His greatest determination and resolution of life was to know Christ. He came to know Christ, not only intricately, but intimately.

**3. The Crucifixion: “Jesus Christ and him crucified.”**

He not only knew and proclaimed his person but also his passion.

In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul gives a brief autobiography. He was a religious terrorist of his day, persecuting the Christian church. One day while consenting to the stoning of Stephen, his 2400 years of Jewish heritage came crashing down upon him. He watched the first Christian martyr being pummeled with stones. Just before death overtook the martyr, Paul saw Stephen kneel down and cry with a loud voice, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60 KJV). Life for the wicked Saul was never to be the same thereafter.

With orders in his hand to persecute the church, he had an encounter with God on the road to Damascus. He surrendered in meekness. Later in the city of Damascus, God dispatched Ananias was dispatched to lay hands on him. Paul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Ghost. The wicked Saul became the witness Paul.

In Philippians chapter 3, after recounting his former pedigree, he put all on the debit side of the ledger and counted all of his education and religious heritage nothing but refuse (dung) that he might win Christ. From that moment on, he had only one ambition in life and that was to “know him (Christ), and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11 KJV, parentheses added).

In the last chapter of his book, *New Testament Holiness*, Thomas Cook gives his personal testimony of being crucified with Christ. He says that he had a clear and satisfying conversion. He thought all was settled until he felt stirrings in his heart that were not conducive to a Christian. He said that God revealed to him an internal opposition and it centered in one point—selfishness. He said that he had once prayed to be saved from hell, but prayer to be saved from himself now was immeasurably more fervent.

He feared not only the penalty of sin that condemned him, but the tyranny of a sinful self that mastered him. Like Paul, he discovered that “Christ crucified” not only revealed the fact of sin, but it was the remedy for sin. Experiencing the crucifixion of the ego, life is no longer oriented around the centrality of self, but is oriented around the centrality of Christ.

Paul says in Romans 6:10-11 (KJV), “For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The word “reckon” does not mean to pretend or assume something that isn’t true. If we merely assume what isn’t really true, then the word “likewise” (in the same way) would indicate that we are to assume that Jesus died and rose again. One is as real as the other. “Reckon” is an accountant term, and by reckoning faith we count our inner crucifixion a fact of experience by biblical mathematics.

As Ralph Earle explains, to reckon oneself to be dead indeed to sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord “does not stand for a whitewash that ‘imputes’ a righteousness which does not in fact exist. It stands for crediting to one’s account (by God in response to faith) a cleansing that has in actual fact taken place.”

Romans 6:18 (KJV) describes us as being “free from sin” and “servants of righteousness.” This freedom does not consist of being released from all restraints, but it consists in a harmonious adjustment to him who has superior rights to our allegiance, affections, and service. Man was never made for self-government; either sin or the savior will be his master. The choice is ours to make.

Crucifixion is followed by a resurrection. If we are dead indeed unto sin, we will be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. From that moment on, Paul said, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1 KJV). Like Paul, we are in this world but our treasures are being laid up in another world where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break in and steal (Matt. 6:20, paraphrase).

The apostle knew that, “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” is the only saving Gospel for a sin-stained humanity, and he was determined not to marginalize this teaching, for he made it the central focus of his preaching. “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2 KJV).

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**1 John 1: 1-10**

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (KJV).

This passage presents Jesus, not only as the messenger, but also the message. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5 KJV). As holiness is exclusive of sin, here John implies that Jesus is “the light of the world” (which Jesus stated outright in John 8:12), and is totally exclusive of darkness.

At the time of creation, the world was in a condition of chaotic night. “The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light and there was light” (Gen. 1:2-3 KJV). God worked from evening until morning. Six times in the first chapter of Genesis we read, “The evening and the morning.” Man works from morning until evening, but God works from darkness to light, from evening until morning. The word “morning” is recorded over 200 times in the Bible because the Christian is always moving toward the morning, the dawn of a new day.

Following the dreadful fall of man in the garden, conditions were not only catastrophic and chaotic, but the darkness was impenetrable. The only piercing ray of light and hope was the promise God gave when he said that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.

As the Spirit brooded over the waters of the deep in creation, he now broods over the human heart to transform chaos into perfect order. In the life of the sanctified, there is always a morning star in the sky. As we are faithful to live, labor, love, and walk in the light with our face toward the sunrise, the day will come when we will finally enter into the gates of an eternal day.

He is the message of light, and the light of the world has a powerful effect on all upon which it shines.

The word ‘if’ occurs five times in the last five verses of this chapter. For instance, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 KJV). This verse contains one condition that results in two consequences. The condition is “walk in the light,” and the consequence will result in communion and cleansing from all sin.

**1. Condition**

It has been stated that any two parts of the trilogy – walking, fellowship, and cleansing – can prove the third. For example, how do I know that I am walking in the light? Because I am enjoying fellowship with him, and the blood is cleansing me from all sin. How do I know that I am being cleansed from all sin? Because I am walking in the light, and I am enjoying fellowship with him. How do I know that I am enjoying fellowship with him? Because I am walking in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing me from all sin.

The person referred to in verse 7, through his revealing light, has through faith received God’s redemptive love and become a child of God and is now enjoying intimacy with Christ. Walking in the light implies that both are going in the same direction and agreeing with one another.

To walk in the light is to do as Paul said in Romans 8:4 – to “walk . . . after the Spirit.” He makes it clear that they who walk “after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:5, 8 KJV) because they agree with the sinful propensities of the flesh. But they that walk after the Spirit agree with and obey the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

In how much light must I walk? We must “walk in the light as he is in the light” and “in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:7, 5). He is not only the example but the extent of the light in which we are to walk. Our new life in Christ has energized and now enables

us to pursue the path of righteousness rather than worldly indulgences.

## **2. Cleansing**

Walking in the light is prerequisite for the total cleansing of the heart. One does not walk long in agreement with his Lord until the same light that dispelled the darkness from his soul when forgiven will disclose the depths of depravity yet remaining within the heart.

Prior to one's conversion, a person is not conscious of the inward drag and downward force of indwelling sin. However; once forgiven and walking with God, a believer will soon recognize something within that hinders spiritual progress and will be in conflict with the one we desire to please. It is then that we will sense the Holy Spirit calling us to make a complete consecration to God. It is vital that one agrees with and obediently responds to the call of God to a total abandonment in order to maintain communion with the Savior. Any delay at this point will cause tension to surface, and one is prone to be defensive. If immediate and total surrender is not made, we are in danger of entering into a calloused religious nominalism.

It is at this point we acknowledge the dual nature of sin. Following the deeds of sin that have been forgiven in the first work of grace effected by the birth of the Spirit, there will, of necessity, have to be a second work of grace effected by the baptism with the Spirit which cleanses one from the disposition to sin. Let us be more specific concerning the dual nature of sin.

The act of sin is a willful thing. We intelligently and willfully consent to it and in so doing we bring guilt upon ourselves. The law of divine justice condemns us because it acts on the presumption that we could have avoided it. This is why repentance is necessary for forgiveness.

However, there is a disposition or state of sin that is not dependent on the will. We can neither create it nor destroy it by our will. It is the cause behind the act of sin. It is still resident even in the nature of a justified person. This state of sin, often called inbred sin, does not come under the operation of pardon. It is not something we have done, but something inherited from the fall. A nature cannot be forgiven; it must be cleansed and only God can do it. There is in the atonement provision made not only to reach the depth of our heart's need, but the heights of His demand on our lives that we be holy as He is holy.

This state of sin is depicted as an outlaw by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:7 (KJV): "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is futile for us to make any feeble attempt to control it, especially when it will not obey the law of God. Suppression does not change the nature of sin any more than a prison cell will change the nature of a prisoner.

Pardon and purity are not synonymous, and they require two diverse conditions. The former requires repentance and the latter requires consecration. If we confess, he will forgive. If we walk in the light, he will cleanse. Forgiveness resolves our wrongdoing, but cleansing resolves our wrong-being.

It is not our walking, nor the light that is the element of our cleansing, but the blood of Jesus Christ. Samuel Chadwick said that our salvation required the entire out-poured life of our Lord.

Light (Word) is what reveals my need of cleansing. Faith lays hold of the word of promise for my cleansing. The blood is the provision for my cleansing, and the Holy Spirit is the power that applies the cleansing blood.

## **3. Communion**

As we continue to walk in the light we will continue in fellowship and communion with God. The sacrifice he made for humanity's redemption speaks loudly of his affection for us and his desire to commune with us. When that same love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit we, like our Savior, want to do only those things that please Him.

Even while we are in this world, we are no longer of this world but our affections are on things above. We will be confronted, on every hand, by a world that is not a friend of God or grace and will challenge every step we take while walking in the light.

While the sins of the past have been forgiven and the sin within has been cleansed, our problem is not a problem of guilt, but of temptation. Although God cleanses the inward rebellion and pride, we still have inherent human propensities. Though not sinful in themselves, they can become an occasion for the sin problem to return. God, in creation, has endowed man with basic appetites, affections, and urges. They require that we keep constant diligence, consistent discipline, and careful discernment over our lives in order to maintain communion with Him. We have been transformed, but not yet translated.

Our physical instincts are very much alive and active, and within themselves they are amoral (neither good nor evil), but they do constitute a basis for temptation.

Richard S. Taylor illustrated thusly, "I'm hungry and my salivary glands function at the very sight of food, even if the food

isn't mine. My glands do not know right from wrong, but I do. Therefore they must not control me, I must control them."

This goes for one's thought-life and every physical instinct and craving that shouts for satisfaction. It is to that extent that one still, even after total cleansing from sin, has a problem that must be kept under control. It requires constant obedience to the checking and promptings of the Holy Spirit. This cleansing is not an absolute cleansing but a conditional and continuous cleansing. We keep walking, and He keeps cleansing.

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## **6. STEPS IN PETER'S FAILURE - LOUIE BUSTLE**

### **Luke 22:54-62 (NKJV)**

"Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, 'This man was also with Him.'

"But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.'

"And after a little while another saw him and said, 'You also are of them.'

"But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!'

"Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.'

"But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!'

"Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So Peter went out and wept bitterly" (NKJV).

It is so easy for us to get caught in the trap of trying to live for Christ in our own strength. One of the greatest temptations that Christians face is the temptation to do it by ourselves. However, this was never the intent that God had for Adam and Eve, for anyone in the Old Testament, for anyone in the New Testament, or for us today. God's plan is to put his laws in our hearts.

Yes, in the Old Testament they had to sacrifice the blood of animals for the remission of sin. In the New Testament, God sent Jesus into this world to be the ultimate sacrifice for every one of us. When Jesus came, he called and appointed twelve apostles. He wanted to put himself into them, he wanted to teach them, and he wanted to empower them for the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ.

One of the people he called was Peter the fisherman. He became a blazing strong evangelist. His ministry started when Christ called him from the fishing nets and said to him, "You will be a fisher of men." Now Peter walked with Jesus for over three years. He was part of the inner circle of Jesus. He walked with Christ almost every day, he did everything with Jesus, he heard all the messages, he saw most if not all of the miracles that Jesus did, and he definitely had great influence.

#### **1. Full of contrast**

However, Peter was full of contrast. He was always the one who came up with the first answer; however, he was slow to understand the truths that Jesus was trying to teach. He made some of the best confessions, but had some of the worst failures.

In our Scripture lesson, Jesus had just come out of the Garden of Gethsemane where the Bible says he prayed more earnestly and was in tremendous agony. The Scripture says, "Then his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44 NKJV). When he came out of his time of prayer, he found his disciples sleeping. They could not even stay with him in prayer. Certainly, this was agonizing prayer, but even in its splendor and its difficulty, the disciples chose to sleep. They could not stay awake.

Earlier in this text, Peter had declared his faithfulness to Jesus. When Jesus was talking about his last days, Peter declared he would never deny the Lord. But Jesus told Peter that the big fisherman would deny him three times and that he would hear the rooster crow. Now they took Jesus prisoner, took him to the high priest's house, but the Scripture says that Peter followed at a distance.

I have been to the place where they think Jesus was taken, where Peter denied Christ. It is on the side of the hill just outside

the old city of Jerusalem. I have stood there many times, thinking of what it would have been like for Peter to stand outside, probably hearing the groans of prisoners being beaten or in the dungeons just underneath.

A servant girl was watching him as he sat by the fire and she proclaimed that this man was with him, but he denied it. Later he denied being one of them, an absolute lie. Another time, when they claimed he was a Galilean, so he had to be one of them, Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" (Luke 22:60 NKJV).

It was then that the rooster crowed and he turned and saw the Lord as Jesus looked upon him. So the Scripture says that Peter went out and wept bitterly.

## **2. Failure to stand up for Jesus**

Can you imagine? First of all, the disappointment that Jesus may have had in Peter. Even though Jesus had proclaimed that Peter would deny him, it had to be heart wrenching for Jesus to realize that this man who had walked with him for over three years was so weak, was not really the leader that Jesus wanted him to be. I can also imagine that Jesus was using this whole issue to bring Peter to his knees. It is only when we are broken from our self-will, our self-plan, our self-worth, totally committed to almighty God, and then filled with God's Holy Spirit and his power, that God can really use us to the fullest extent. I am sure this was in the mind of Jesus as he looked upon Peter.

The look! Can you imagine the look of sadness on the face of Jesus as he gazed into the eyes of Peter? Looking into the face of Jesus may have absolutely broken Peter from his pride, his self-will, his wanting to do this in his own strength. Certainly, it would have been better if Peter had humbled himself as he said he would. But if you look at the confidence of Peter, you notice that his confidence was always in himself. "I can do this!" And that may be our big downfall as well.

## **3. Faltering in prayer**

Could it have been his lack of prayer? Certainly, in this chapter, Luke is trying to portray that these disciples slept while Jesus prayed. One of the most important things we can do today is pray, but it is probably one of the least things we do. Sometimes we just do little sentence prayers, but I am wondering if God doesn't want us to become intercessors, to give ourselves in prayer. Jesus talked a great deal about praying, the importance of prayer, of giving yourself to prayer, of giving time to prayer, and yet many believers today are guilty of not praying.

Then, when many believers do pray they act like God is the Santa Claus. They pray for all of their wants and this becomes a pattern, day in and day out. So, Peter was weak and he needed a power from on high to empower him, to change him. If Peter, having walked with Christ for more than three years needed a higher power, how much more do we need that higher power?

## **4. Fear of what people say**

Peter also had the fear of what people would say. Right at the time of the very suffering of Jesus, Peter turned his back on his friend. When we live close to the world, we have a difficult time embracing and standing up for the truths of the Church. We have a difficult time being faithful to the plan of God, because we are afraid of what people will say.

I wonder how many ways today we deny Christ. Many believers don't want to be strong and publicly identify with Christ. They don't mind people recognizing them as believers, but they don't want to be "fanatical," as the world would label them. For the most part, "fanatical" is just a deeply committed believer in Christ. However, God expects us to be radical believers, to take a stand, to be witnesses for him, to show people what it means to live a Christ-like life.

Peter definitely had a lack of dedication and when the Scripture says he followed "at a distance," he definitely was afraid they would identify him. I think many times we follow Jesus from a distance, and don't want people to recognize us as being committed to him. Many times we are like Peter. We are more associated with the world, hoping to be recognized as one of them, as belonging to the people around us.

Peter was around the fire because he was cold. He was with the world and he rejected the opportunity to be with Christ. He was with the group so he didn't want to identify himself with his master in front of them.

## **5. Lack of personal power**

It is easy for us to look at Peter and throw the blame on him, but the real reason Peter failed was the lack of personal power from God within. When you look at the believers before Pentecost and after Pentecost, you begin to understand the issue. Before Pentecost, these believers lived in their own strength. Jesus sent them to the upper room because he wanted them to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit and receive this power.

This is what happened in Acts chapter two. At Pentecost, their hearts were cleansed from the carnal nature or their self-centeredness and self-sovereignty. At Pentecost they were empowered with the Holy Spirit, so that God could use them. The apostle

Peter came out of Pentecost empowered to preach God's sermon. He preached the sermon with such power that more than 3,000 people came to know Jesus Christ. The power of God was in him and God was using him. This became the model of his life after Pentecost.

When we see the failure of Peter, it should point us to recognize our weakness and need. When we see the power of God in Peter after Pentecost, it should lead us to the place of wanting to turn our lives over totally to God, humble ourselves, and let Christ put us on the cross so that we can truly live. It is only when we die that we can truly live the deep, Christ-like life that he died to give us.

The book of Acts talks about the "acts of the apostles." Actually, it was the acts of the Holy Spirit as he worked through the apostles. We see God doing amazing things throughout this book. We see the power of God in them. We see them dedicated to prayer. We note the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ and it is only because of the Pentecost in the lives of these 120 who then spread the Gospel along with their followers to the whole world.

The question is this: "Will we try to live this Christian life in our own strength? Will we continue to go to church, read our Bible, pay our tithe, possibly teach a Sunday school class, and basically do it through our own abilities? Will we live with that carnal nature in our hearts, try every day to suppress that carnal nature, and be as good as we could possibly be in our own strength. Or, will we allow God to bring us to our knees and get so hungry for the infilling of God's Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace that we will submit ourselves, pray through to victory, and allow God to give us a divine work of sanctifying grace?" When He comes, He will cleanse our hearts from the sin principle so that we can truly love and serve him with all of our lives.

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**7. HOLINESS: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT, PART ONE - LOUIE E. BUSTLE**

**Hebrews 12:14**

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (NKJV).

Holiness is the central message of the Word of God. From Genesis to Revelation, a thread runs through every book: God is holy and He wants us to be holy. This was God's purpose from the very beginning when he created Adam and Eve. We have done a good job in past years of preaching holiness and entire sanctification as the message of God. In these years, many of our pastors are preaching the ethics of holiness or how one should live.

However, we're not doing as good a job explaining how we can have the power of God to be able to live. We're not hearing enough about how we can be sanctified holy, how to be empowered and cleansed of all sin so that we can live the holy life.

I was converted when I was 21 and heard some odd concepts of holiness in those early years of legalism. I remember hearing one sermon in which the preacher ranted and raved for about 45 minutes against cowboy boots. He paced back and forth across the platform, preaching how boots would give you pride. Many times, we have heard all kinds of preaching of what holiness does and what it does not do. In some circles, it has been preached that once you are saved and sanctified, that is kind of the end of your growth. You have everything you ever needed. Some preached holiness as if it is such a perfect experience, that you have arrived.

The two great commandments express it so well, as Jesus is trying to get us to understand that God is holy and he wants us to be holy. The only way to love God with all your heart is to be holy, singular in your love. The result of that is the second great commandment: because God loves us, He fills us with His love and then helps us love others as ourselves.

In Hebrews 12:14, the writer is expressing it so well. He says we must "pursue peace . . . and holiness." This takes us back to the second great commandment – God intends for us to live in peace with all men. The second concept here is that God intends for us to be holy, pursue peace with all men and holiness, for without peace or without holiness no man shall see the Lord. This is God's intended purpose for all of us.

Now the problem is this: it is bad to expect too little out of this experience of sanctification and it is bad to expect too much. In past years, many preached sanctification as a "fix-it-all" experience. Unfortunately, we expect so little that we have brought God down to our level rather than let God take us to his level. We have studied about how we can live and how we can strive, but we have made holiness as something we strive for in our strength. The good news is that God can give us a grace that is beyond our ability. He can give a power that is beyond us, to enable us to live as He expects us to live – holy lives!

So, when we look at the experience of sanctification we expect sanctification will do certain things for us. We have done a pretty good job of preaching a second work of grace, but we have not done a very good job at preaching a disciplined life. We must bring our habits into harmony with our experience. God cleanses our hearts when we are sanctified, and He also gives us a responsibility. This involves disciplining our everyday habits - what we say, what we do, how we react. Therefore, in loving God there is a discipline necessary as we strive to walk as Jesus walked.

I would like to explain today some of the things that the experience of sanctification does not do automatically.

**1. Being sanctified does not take away the possibility of sin.**

We will always have the ability to choose to sin, but 1 John 1:7 explains it very well: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (NKJV).

I have learned to read all Scripture through the eyes of 1 John 1:7. "If we walk in the light," means that God gives some people different light in the different levels of their walk. Some preach that being sanctified means you cannot sin. However, we always have a free will. In other words, we have the ability not to sin. We can be so filled with the love of God that we don't want to sin. When God sanctifies our hearts, He cleanses us from the carnal nature, from the divided love. Yes, He has already forgiven us of our sins and we have been changed. But now we have a power within us that enables us to live a holy life every day of our lives. We don't have to continue in sin. In fact, we don't want to continue in sin because we want to please God.

**2. The second is that it does not give us the liberty from temptation.**

If we put ourselves into certain situations, the devil is going to tempt us. Jesus was tempted and we can be tempted. 1 John 4:4 tells us that, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (NKJV). We can be tempted, but sanctification gives us the power to triumph over temptation. Once we are sanctified, God does not pull us out of the world. He wants his people to live in the world, to be tried and tested, and He wants us to choose to be His people, choose to love Him and choose to serve Him. He will allow the devil to tempt us. We must discipline ourselves to run from any closeness to temptation so we do not allow the devil to put us into a place where we could fall. There is a power from on high that will help us triumph over temptation.

**3. The third thing is that it does not give us perfect discernment.**

We will always be human. I may have a problem in understanding people or even understanding the intent of a person. But there is a willingness to follow a higher wisdom by which the Holy Spirit guides us.

For instance, the apostle Peter had a prejudice against the Gentiles, even after he was sanctified. God used him in a mighty way. God used Peter to heal the sick, to speak the words of the gospel and thousands of people came to know the Lord. God used him to guide the church. At the same time, he had a prejudice against the Gentiles. God was able to give him a vision that revealed to him his prejudice.

Even then, he struggled, because we see that later he and the apostle Paul had strong words over his weakness in this area. He was afraid of what people would say about his being closely related with the Gentiles. We can have a prejudice even after being sanctified. But when God sanctifies our hearts, we must then bring our lives into harmony with the experience He has given us so that we can follow this higher wisdom. His Holy Spirit will guide us and He will begin to skim off those things that God wants out of our lives. He will help us get rid of prejudice and other things that would not be in harmony with God's perfect plan for us.

**4. It is not the escape from sickness, but it is the triumph in sickness.**

I have heard some TV preachers talk about believers who are sick as being the result of their sinning. Just because you are sanctified doesn't mean you are free from sickness. Good, holy people will fall ill. I have seen God touch people and heal them. I have seen sinners healed. I have seen good, holy people healed, and we do believe that God is able to heal. But we also believe that everyone is going to die. In order to die, you are probably going to have to get sick.

The apostle Paul had a problem. He prayed that God would take away the thorn from his flesh, this sickness. We think it was probably bad eyesight. He prayed until God gave him the answer and said, "My grace is sufficient" (2 Corinthians 12:9). And God's grace is sufficient for us. He may choose to heal us in this life but he may choose to heal us in heaven.

**5. It is not the exemption from conflict, but the victory in any conflict.**

God can give us a good attitude and help us with all our conflicts. Each of us has a tendency to have conflicts with others. Few of us see eye to eye with every other person. What holiness does is that he fills our hearts with love so that we develop good attitudes, good habits, and we can still work with people even though we do not see things exactly the same.

Paul and Barnabas had a major conflict over John Mark in Acts 13. It was so strong that they decided to go their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and Paul took a new partner. Later the apostle Paul says that Mark was very useful for his ministry, which

means that they were still able to work together. The issue is that holiness gives us such an attitude of love that even though we may want to do things differently, we can have peace with our fellow man. It really is a discipline of life.

Because our churches are so filled with people who are bitter, I could go around the world and preach on resentments, bitterness, jealousies, bad attitudes, and if people will be honest, the altars will line with seekers. These are natural human reactions and emotions but should not be present in the hearts of the sanctified. God enables the sanctified to be filled with a love from on high. Even then, we must keep our emotions in subjection to the Holy Spirit. He will cut out those jealousies, the bitterness, and those resentments we may have. Then as we bring our lives into harmony with God, He will squeeze the jealousies and bitterness out of our lives so that we live the holy life that God wants us to live.

Bad habits will stay with us forever if we are not careful. I was in a country many years ago, holding a district assembly and we were in a major battle. One faction of the assembly wanted to control another area of another group. The battle was very heated. I finally stood to my feet and said, "You would think that your experience would help you with these attitudes."

One pastor stood to his feet, shook his fist, and yelled at me, "It is our ... blood in us." I pointed out to that pastor, "God can even sanctify your ... blood," and the battle was over.

We can get so caught up in emotions, about who is right, and who receives justice, that we lose sight of what holiness is and what holiness does. We forget how we should react. Instead of living at peace with these people, they were fighting and struggling, one trying to get the upper hand over the other. Disciplined holiness will help us to live in harmony with people.

Don't be sidetracked by what holiness will not do. Instead, embrace what it will do and live a holy life. (Continued)

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## **8. HOLINESS: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT, PART TWO - LOUIE BUSTLE**

### **Hebrews 12:14**

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (NKJV).

A thread runs through every book of the Bible: God is holy and he wants us to be holy. Across the years, there has been considerable confusion about what holiness is and what it is not. I have seen perplexity about what holiness will do and what it will not do. Let's explore some of these things.

#### **6. It is not liberty from the devil, but the grace to keep us established in holy love.**

The devil is always going to be at our heels. He will do everything he can to keep us from following Jesus. He will work on us at our weakest point. If you have a tendency to fall into sin in a particular area of your life, the devil will throw darts and bring you into situations that will trip you up if you are not careful. So you always have to guard against the devil.

What God intends in sanctification is to give us a grace that will keep us established. He gives us a power that is beyond ourselves. "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8 NKJV). So, God is greater than the devil, God is on our side, and he will help us resist the devil. However, he expects us to run from the devil, to turn our back on the devil, to stay away from any kind of temptation, to stay away from any place that would trip us up and hinder our walk with God.

#### **7. It does not automatically change your habits, but gives you a power so that you can bring your habits into harmony with your walk with Christ.**

God wants your habits to be in harmony with the experience he has given you in sanctification. It is so easy for us to get into bad habits. In one country where we lived, there were large avenues with big roundabouts. I would come to those roundabouts and it didn't make any difference which lane I was in, some driver would cut me off. So I got into a bad habit of fussing about these drivers.

One day I was going around one of those roundabouts when a very good friend of mine was with me, visiting from the United States. I was fussing about these people and the way they drive. I really had a bad attitude. My friend looked at me and said, "You would think holiness would help you with that attitude."

Never again did I fuss at those drivers. In fact, before I left there, I was driving just like them. I had a sanctified heart but still developed a bad habit. My friend saw that this was inconsistent with my profession of holiness.

You see, we all can get into those kinds of habits, and there are many of them. Many times we will just have bad attitudes

and we will fuss, criticize, and lash out our tongue at someone else. While God's work in us does not automatically fix this, he does give us a higher power so we can bring those habits into harmony with our sanctification experience.

**8. It is not the termination of progress but the desire to grow in holiness.**

A person who is truly sanctified wants to mature every day, and grow closer to God every day. Being sanctified is not the end; it is the beginning. It is not the termination of progress; it enables us to begin a life in Jesus Christ so we can love him with all our heart and follow him with all our lives. It is God's plan for us to be sanctified, to experience a definite work of grace. While there is a process that brings us to that place, there is also a process of growth in grace everyday of our lives. God's plan is for us to mature and keep on maturing. We are cleansed in the moment of sanctification, but we are constantly growing closer to God and growing to live more like Jesus everyday of our lives.

**9. It does not change your self-esteem.**

It does not automatically fix your inferiority complex. It does not give you automatic success, but sanctification gives you a new base in life. It gives you the Holy Spirit, the holy helper, who will come alongside of you. Though you may have been beaten down as a child in your self-esteem, and you may be dealing with a huge inferiority complex, the love of Jesus Christ will begin to help you overcome these kinds of issues in your life. The Holy Spirit will keep working with you until you overcome that inferiority complex and begin to believe in yourself as Jesus believes in you. Your self-esteem will begin to build as God enables you and gives you a whole new self-worth.

**10. Being sanctified does not mean that you will automatically be successful.**

God can give you vision, a dream, and plans for the work of God. If you will begin to realize that God is with you and helping you, you may begin to dream the dream that God has for you. He will give you success but it may not be instant. Many workers for God have failed at one thing or another. One question is, "Are we willing to fail for Jesus?" Yes, you may fail, but out of that failure, God enables you to learn so that you can move on to success. He will give you wisdom and enable you to build on your successes. Just think that the Holy Spirit is there to help you and he will help you find new ways to do it. He will give you a work ethic. He will give you drive to do something significant for God. He will help you to read, to learn, and constantly to improve, constantly reaching for new levels in the plan of God for your life. There is a "but": you must give yourself to the task.

**11. Being sanctified doesn't automatically change your personality.**

For instance, I am, by nature a very timid person. I can get on an airplane and ride fifteen hours to a destination on the other side of the world. I am not like one of these people who gets on an airplane and by the time he has arrived a few hours later, he has won about everybody on the plane. Actually, I would just as soon the person next to me wouldn't even say hello. I could get on that plane and ride fifteen hours without saying hello to that person.

But sanctification has enabled me to override that timidity. If I had thought God would call me to preach when I was a teenager, I would have died of a heart attack. I could never get in front of my class and speak. But when God called me to preach, He enabled me to be able to get in front of a group of people. I have been able to do that through the power of the Spirit.

So, the Holy Spirit has given me a power beyond myself that has not changed my personality but he has helped me to override my personality. Some people are naturally negative. God can help you to be positive, to look at life positively, rather than getting up on the negative side every day. Some people are just overbearing. They think is it their job to run everybody else's life. But God can help you to have self-control, by which you are facilitating and helping other people, not tearing them down and not being overbearing in trying to run their lives.

So, sanctification is a divine work of grace in which God comes and cleanses our hearts from inbred sin, that carnal nature, the sin principle, and he takes away the divided-ness of our love for our heavenly Father.

Sanctification is the cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit working in us in a definite work of grace. Then the Holy Spirit works in us every day to bring us to the full knowledge of the power of God in Jesus Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Let's celebrate what holiness can do and will do, without becoming sidetracked by what it cannot and will not do. What it can do is to fill us with God's Spirit and enable us to live a Christ-like life. As the songwriter said:

*"My desire, to be like Jesus,  
My desire, to be like Him.  
His Spirit fill me, His love o'erwhelm me,  
In deed and word, to be like Him."<sup>14</sup>*

That's what holiness can do for us!

## **9. A KING'S PRAYER FOR A PURE HEART - THOMAS HERMIZ**

### **Psalm 51:1-19**

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

"Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

"Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

"In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar."

The life of King David is an example of the heights of holy living to which one can rise, and the depths of degradation to which one can fall. He hit both the top and the bottom. It is staggering to think that he who wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd" and so many beautiful psalms could be guilty of such dark and degrading sins.

One evening he went up to the flat roof of the palace to get some fresh air. From his lofty perch, he looked into his neighbor's backyard and saw a beautiful woman by the name of Bathsheba taking a bath. Immediately, lust filled his heart. He summoned her to the palace where he then committed the act adultery. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, who was one of his trusted and loyal soldiers. At that very time, Uriah was away in battle fighting for his king.

A short time later Bathsheba sent David the message that she was pregnant and he was the father. Immediately David began to develop a plan to hide his sin. Under false pretense, he called Uriah home from the battle. He tried to get Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah was such a loyal soldier he refused the opportunity because his comrades were still in battle. So David sent him back to the front lines and gave the orders that he was to be killed in the battle. After Uriah's death, David then brought Bathsheba to his palace to be one of his wives. David was confident that he had covered his sinful tracks.

King David was now guilty of adultery, murder, and gross deception. You can't fall much lower than David fell. Sin always takes you farther than you intended to go.

Sometime later God sent his prophet Nathan to deal with David about his sins. David had succeeded in hiding his sins from others but he could not hide them from God. You can be sure your sins will find you out.

Nathan told him a story about a rich man and a poor man. The poor man and his family had a lamb that was a family pet. The rich man had a visitor and rather than taking an animal from his huge flock, he took the poor man's pet lamb. He ordered it killed, prepared for eating, and served it to his guest. When David heard this story, he was very angry. He said the rich man "must die."

Nathan said, "David, you're the man." David was the rich man who took the poor man's pet lamb. Nathan then pronounced the judgment of God on David and told him "the sword will never depart from your house" (2 Samuel 12:10). King David was now under a death sentence. The baby died and David wept before the Lord. This fifty-first Psalm is David's prayer of repentance.

#### **1. Prayer for Pardon (vv. 1-4).**

David begins his prayer by crying out, "Have mercy upon me, oh God" (v. 1). David did not ask for justice but for mercy.

Under the law, the penalty for adultery and murder meant that David would have been stoned to death. David did not want justice. He wanted mercy.

An atheist once said to me, “All you Christians want to talk about is grace and mercy. If there was a God he would be a God of justice.”

God is a God of justice. The only reason we can experience his grace and mercy is because, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus purchased our redemption at Calvary. He now sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us. We have been ransomed by the blood of Christ.

In verse two, David prayed, “Blot out my transgressions.” David now understood that the consequences of his sins would follow him the rest of his life. But he sought forgiveness so that his sins would no longer separate him from fellowship and communion with God.

Notice the personal pronouns in verse three. “I acknowledge MY transgressions: and MY sin is ever before ME” (KJV, capitalization added). David took full responsibility for his actions. He made no attempt to blame his sins on anyone other than himself.

In verse four, David confessed that he had sinned against God. He violated Bathsheba, betrayed Uriah, but he sinned against God. This is why sin is so serious. Joseph recognized this as he escaped from a very powerful woman and said, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9b).

## **2. Prayer for Purity (v. 5).**

In verse 5 David prayed, “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me” (NKJV). David was not saying that his mother was immoral. He understood that at the moment of conception his humanity was polluted with the dreadful disease of sin.

There must have been times when David asked himself, “Why did I do it? Why was I so weak? Why was I so willing?” Back of his deliberate choice to sin there was an inclination toward sin so deep and subtle within him that yielding was easier than resisting. David now saw this and he was acknowledging that he had been depraved since conception. This is an amazing confession. Many people, in order to look good, may admit to a specific sin as long as they don’t have to admit that they are an evil person. We want people to think that we are really a pretty decent human being.

David confessed both what he did and what he was. He knew as much as he needed forgiveness, he also needed his heart to be cleansed from its sinful disposition. We must understand that every one of us inherited from Adam this very same sinful disposition. We also need more than forgiveness.

In verse seven he prayed, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow” (KJV).

Living under grace we can thank God for the blood of Jesus that goes deeper than the deepest stain of sin and makes the vilest of sinners clean. However, David desired a deeper cleansing, beyond forgiveness. He wanted a heart that was whiter than snow. He longed for a deeper cleansing from the sinful disposition that the natural eye cannot see.

In New Testament terms he wanted to be saved and sanctified. He seemed to have some understanding of the twofold nature of sin. It is not until we understand this that we will ever be able to comprehend why we need to be saved and sanctified. Very simply it goes like this: when we were conceived, our humanity was infected with the dreadful disease of sin. We sometimes refer to this as inherited depravity. We are not responsible for this condition. We cannot be forgiven for something for which we are not responsible.

However, because of this sinful condition, we have a natural inclination to want to disobey God and commit various sinful acts. No one had to teach us how to be deceitful or how to lie or to be selfish. So at an early age we begin to commit willful acts of sin. Because we have all willfully sinned against God, we must repent and seek His forgiveness.

As wonderful as it is to be forgiven, we still must contend with the sinful disposition with which we were born. So within the heart of every born again believer a war is going on between this disposition and the Holy Spirit. Is there a solution for this situation? The answer is a resounding YES.

If we will come to God as a born again believer, with our sins under the blood, and offer ourselves to God in an act of complete consecration, He will cleanse from our hearts this sinful disposition and fill us with his Holy Spirit. In entire sanctification, your prayer is not, forgive me, but cleanse me.

In verse eleven we can see the depth of David’s conviction when he cried out, “Do not cast me from your presence or not

take your Holy Spirit from me.” David must have thinking about his predecessor, Saul. Saul had disobeyed God. On the battlefield as he was dying he cried out, “Behold I have played the fool. God has departed from me . . . and does not answer me anymore” (1 Samuel 26:21b, 28:15 NKJV).

We need to realize that sin has horrible consequences. Without the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, we would just drift along in sin and never seek the Lord.

I want to urge you not only to seek forgiveness from the sins you have willfully committed, but seek cleansing from the disposition of sin you inherited from Adam. There is a deeper cleansing through the blood of Christ. You can have a clean heart.

### **3. Prayer of Participation**

In verse thirteen, David prayed, “Then I will teach transgressors Your ways and sinners shall be converted to You” (NKJV). David was saying, “Lord, if you hear my prayer and meet my need, I will sing your praises and pay my offerings.” It is obvious that David meant business. He wanted the Lord to know that he would worship him and pay his offerings.

This is the prayer of a fallen man who understands he needs not only forgiveness but cleansing from his double mindedness. His very nature had been corrupted and he needed a double cure.

God saves us so he can sanctify us. He sanctifies us so he can work through us.

### **Conclusion:**

Following this prayer, Nathan returned to David and said, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die” but “the sword will never depart from your house” (2 Samuel 12:13, 10). The forgiveness and cleansing were sweet but the consequences were bitter.

If you have not been entirely sanctified, I urge you to surrender your will to God and seek deliverance from the horrible anti-God disposition that remains in the heart of the born again believer. Please don’t delay any longer. God is saying, “Be holy for I am holy.”

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## **10. GROWING IN CHRISTLIKENESS - THOMAS HERMIZ**

### **I Peter 2:2**

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

Over the years in our holiness churches, we have placed a strong emphasis on entering into the sanctified life. We have emphasized the crises aspects of consecration and cleansing. This emphasis has been so strong that many have the mistaken idea that once they have been entirely sanctified they have reached the ultimate of Christian maturity.

I would never want to minimize the absolute importance of the crisis aspect of entire sanctification. It is vitally important and essential. One’s growth in grace will be greatly limited until the sinful disposition we all inherited from Adam is cleansed. This carnal, anti-God disposition cannot be cleansed by growing in grace or by getting involved in the church. It can only be cleansed by the blood of Christ in His sanctifying grace. So the crisis is essential but it is not the ultimate of the Christian lifestyle. Purity is not maturity.

Entire sanctification places us on the threshold of unlimited possibilities of growth in grace. Once we have entered into this deeper relationship with the Lord we must seek to excel in living the Christian life. Christlikeness must become our passion.

When E. Stanley Jones asked the great Hindu leader of India, Mahatma Gandhi, what he could do to increase the effectiveness of Christianity in India, Gandhi responded, “You Christians, especially missionaries, should begin to live more like Christ.”<sup>15</sup> He was right; even sanctified believers must become more Christ-like.

The entirely sanctified have reached a place where they are no longer self-centered but Christ-centered. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are living a holy life that glorifies the Lord. However, there is still the need to grow in Christlikeness.

### **1. Developing a Christ-Ilike Personality**

Even though believers may be Christ-centered, Spirit-filled children of God, their personalities are only relatively Christ-like. One may still be rather crude, ill-mannered, overbearing and frequently over-reacting to various life situations.

If you were a high strung, volatile person before you were entirely sanctified, you will basically have that same tendency after you are sanctified. It will be important for you to develop self-control over your emotions and to acquire a greater level of patience. This does not happen overnight. It is a process that takes some time.

If you were a low key, laid-back person before you were entirely sanctified, you will be low key and laid-back after your sanctification. You will need to discipline yourself to stop procrastinating and get things done in a timely fashion.

We all have areas in our lives where we must grow to become more Christ-like in our attitudes, reactions, and responses. This does not happen instantaneously at an altar of prayer. It is a process. Thank God for the changes he has made in your life, but never be content with where you are. Daily seek to know him better and to become more like him. Maturity is open ended. Self-satisfaction can be fatal to spiritual growth.

The Lord can use our different personalities in building his kingdom. He does not stamp us all out of the same mold. He will refine our personalities so the beauty of Jesus can be seen more clearly in us. This is an important aspect of progressive sanctification.

Entirely sanctified people have blind spots and sometimes even prejudice of which they are not aware. When light comes, they thank God for it and they walk in the light. Even Peter was prejudiced toward the Gentiles long after being filled with Spirit. However, when the Lord gave him a vision, he walked in the light and took the gospel to the Gentiles.

If you are struggling with impatience it doesn't necessarily mean that you are not sanctified. It might mean you need a good night of rest or a change in medicine. It might mean that you need relief from a stressful situation. Patience is an example of something that we develop as we walk with God. The Word tells us that tribulation develops patience.

A little girl, with her mother, visited Commissioner Brengle of the Salvation Army when he was seventy-five years of age. When they left, the little girl asked her mother, "Mother, would Jesus have looked like Commissioner Brengle had he lived to be seventy-five?" The beauty of Jesus must have been visible in the face and personality of the commissioner. What a beautiful tribute to a godly man.

## **2. Developing Christlike Relationships**

Mature Christians, with the "mind of Christ," will esteem others to be better than themselves. Christ exemplified this in that he emptied himself and gave up his rights in order that he might save us.

When we focus on ourselves and our own interests, we will always have discord and division. It results in broken relationships. Maturing Christians will progress in humility rather than self-exaltation and demanding their own way.

The devil loves it when there is division and discord among the saints. It plays right into his hand to destroy the kingdom of God. If we are all "in Christ" and living a sanctified life, we ought to be in fellowship with one another. To say we have the "mind of Christ" and then to be out of fellowship is a contradiction.

This does not mean that we will always agree with everyone. Neither does it mean we will like every personality or lifestyle. In fact, our opinions and personalities may be so different that we might decide to go in opposite directions. However, we ought to be able to agree that we will disagree in a loving, Christ-like manner. How can we have a "holier than thou" attitude and say we have the "mind of Christ"?

A mature child of God will be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9 KJV). In the Christian life, we have many battles to fight. The manner in which we fight these battles is very important. We must choose our battles carefully and make certain that we go into battle with a Christ-like approach.

My mother was wise when she told my brother and me, after we would get into fights at school, that not every mountain was worth dying on. Some mountains are worth dying for such as biblical truth and doctrine. Tragically, many of the battles that go on in the church are over personal preferences, what we like or dislike. So often they are over trivial issues that have no eternal significance whatsoever.

Mature saints seek peace and understanding. They do not fan the flames of strife and discord.

## **3. Developing Christlike Discernment**

This is a day when the followers of Christ really need spiritual discernment and knowledge of God's Word. Entire sanctification does not instantly give you perfect discernment or a complete understanding of God's Word.

Knowledge and discernment must be developed over time as we mature in the grace and knowledge of God's Word. To become a Christian with discernment and knowledge of God's Word takes time and discipline.

The Church at Corinth was filled with carnal, immature followers of Christ. Paul exhorted them in I Corinthians 14:20,

“Brothers, stop thinking like children.” They were caught up with the showier, more spectacular gifts. So Paul chided them to grow up, stop being childish, and become adults.

The members of the Corinthian tribe have not all vanished. There is a sad tendency among Christians today to run after the spectacular and chase every fad that comes along. We must increase our understanding of truth and develop a discerning mind or we will be caught up in all the shallow, silly stuff that is present in the church world today.

Mature Christians are not easily sidetracked by false doctrine and fads. They have developed stability in their walk with God. They are not easily misled. Biblical illiteracy is so prevalent in the church today that many are easily misled.

An entirely sanctified person doesn't have all knowledge or discernment. It must be developed. We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Immature Christians are prone to measure spirituality by whether or not a miracle takes place. Paul saw it differently. Three times he asked God to remove a thorn from his flesh and three times God said, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9a).

A mature follower of Christ would understand that the greater miracle was not deliverance from the thorn, but deliverance from being preoccupied with it and having the strength to move forward.

Another important aspect of discernment is learning to understand the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, “Now when I went to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia” (2 Cor. 2:12-13). Paul was led and checked by the Holy Spirit.

Learning to walk in the Spirit is the essence of the normal Christian life. In Galatians 5:25 Paul wrote, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep step with the Spirit.” It takes time to recognize the voice of the Spirit when he prompts action or seeks to restrain us. Learning how to walk in the Spirit will save you a lot of grief. It will help you to avoid getting into situations where you really don't fit. Many fail because they are out of place. This does not mean they are not sanctified; they are simply trying to do something they are not gifted or capable of doing.

Serving for many years on several university boards, I watched as capable men were taken out of the classroom and placed in administrative positions. Sadly, it often ended in failure.

God requires our all and no more. We all have limitations. Don't fret over that reality. If you can't carry a tune, don't join the choir. Find out what you are gifted to do and do it for the glory of God.

#### **Conclusion:**

The security of your soul depends on your continued growth in grace. Let's keep pressing forward toward the goal.

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#### **WHY DO I ACT THIS WAY? - THOMAS HERMIZ**

##### **Romans 7:15-25; 8:1-4**

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!

“So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful

nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”

You have been born again! Old things have passed away. You are living a transformed life. You are a new person in Christ Jesus. However, there are times when you are really disappointed in your conduct. You realize that at times your attitude or reactions are not becoming to a true Christian disciple. You find yourself begging God for forgiveness over and over again. You grit your teeth and determine, “I’m going to do better.” And then it happens again and again.

What’s the problem? You ask yourself, “Why do I act this way?” You really hate it when your conduct isn’t what it should be. Something within you longs to be more like Jesus. What’s the problem? Is there a solution?

### **1. Paul’s Description of a Carnal Christian (Rom.7:15-25)**

In this seventh chapter of Romans Paul describes your situation and gives us the solution. So take heart. Your dilemma is not a mystery. There is a beautiful solution. You are what Paul calls a “carnal Christian.” He points out that there is a sinful disposition that remains in the heart of every born again believer. It is a disposition that we all inherited from Adam. We have a measure of victory over it when we are saved. However, it remains within us until it is cleansed in the experience of entire sanctification.

It is a disposition that wants to pull us away from God. It is an anti-God disposition that will not, cannot conform to the will of God. So in the heart of every born again believer there is an internal war taking place between the Spirit of the Lord within and this evil disposition.

In this seventh chapter of Romans, Paul is describing this very situation. He is describing a believer who now loves the way of the Lord. In verse twenty-two he tells us the person he is describing delights in the law of God. He is not talking about a non-believer. He is talking about someone who has been born again but not yet entirely sanctified.

This downward drag within you cannot be traced back to child abuse or a legalistic upbringing. It has nothing to do with your nationality or personality. It has always been with you. You inherited it from Adam.

Paul continues to describe your situation in verse fifteen when he tells us that, on one hand, he wanted to do what was right but didn’t do it. Then on the other hand, he says, “What I hate I do.” He is saying, this is the experience of the born again believer. Often they are confused by it and don’t understand the problem.

You may be inclined to think, “Well, this is just the way I am and there isn’t anything I can do about it.” So you struggle on, trying to suppress this terrible inner infection.

Paul makes two very clear points about this dilemma. First, you can’t blame it on the law. In verse 16 he declares, “The law is good.” Secondly, you can’t blame it on your human nature. In verse 20 he emphatically states, “It is sin that dwells within you.” God created us in his image and when he finished he said, “It is good.” He created us pure and holy. When Adam sinned, he brought this anti-God disposition into every one of us. This carnal disposition is inherited from Adam. It is a damnable curse and we must deal with it.

A born again believer has a dual disposition. You are committed to Christ but this evil disposition continues to infect your humanity. You cannot control it in your power. You must understand that your proneness toward sin infected you at conception. It remains within you even after you have been forgiven for the willful sins you have committed.

### **2. Paul’s Distinction between the Sins of the Flesh and the Sins of the Spirit**

The spiritual battle Paul is describing in this seventh chapter of Romans is not the committing of willful sins of the flesh. He is describing sins of the spirit that flow out of the carnal mind. If we are not careful, we commit the sins of the flesh. He is talking about our struggle with the self, our ego, our self-centeredness. This is what causes the born again believer to fail repeatedly. It will manifest itself in lukewarmness, drifting, jealousy, coveting, and the failure to make an absolute surrender to God. It is revealed in bad attitudes, carnal pride, bitterness, and unforgiveness.

Someone may be thinking, “Paul, that’s me, you are describing my experience.” Peter is a perfect example of this. He said to Christ, “I won’t fail you, I will never deny you.” But he did. When his safety and security were on the line, he blatantly denied his Lord.

Uncle Bud Robinson was dramatically saved from a life of sin. God used him in powerful ways for ten years in leading many others to Christ. But he discovered there was something in his heart that conversion didn’t solve. There were things such as pride, selfishness, jealousies, fretting, pouting, self-will, wrath, and malice. “These,” he said, “are some of the enemies that were not killed in conversion.”

After each defeat, he would cry out to the Lord for forgiveness and make all kinds of resolutions. The cry of his heart was,

“Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24 NKJV). When he surrendered his all and was entirely sanctified, he said he experienced the deepest, sweetest peace he had ever known.

If you are struggling with the sins of the spirit, including a love for the world or a root of bitterness, there is a solution. Don't settle for a life of defeat.

**3. Paul's Solution for Your Dilemma**

Paul, speaking for carnal Christians, cries out, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24 NKJV). He is not pleading for someone to take his life. He is referring to the “body of sin,” or the sinful disposition that was infecting his humanity. He then answers the question he raised, “I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:25a). He then continues in chapter eight with the good news that there is a solution for the bad news described in chapter seven.

He declares, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-2 NKJV).

Romans chapter seven is not the best that God has for us in this life. There is a new law; it's the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Paul declared, “It has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is more than a match for the slavery of the law of sin and death. Inherited depravity is not amenable to us, but it is amenable to God. There is deliverance from this carnal disposition. You can be free!

Jesus said there is a new law, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” He went on to say that the second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39 NKJV).

So it raises the question, “How do we get there?” We must surrender every aspect of our lives to God. Our money, time, relationships, body, daily practices, and above all our will. He must be Lord of all. So we must consecrate our career, ambitions, appetites, and affections to Him.

God asked Abraham for his son Isaac. This is where many back up and withdraw and say, “Lord you're asking too much, I can't give that up or I can't give him or her up.” You have to come to a place where you want Christ unconditionally at any cost. You will have to want a clean heart more than you want happiness. You must be willing to abandon all of your selfish desires to God.

You will never get settled spiritually until you settle once and for all that you want God's will over everything else in your life. When you make this complete consecration, God will cleanse your heart from its sinful disposition and fill you with the Holy Spirit. This is a second definite work of grace called entire sanctification.

Once you have been sanctified, you are now at a place where you can really begin to grow and mature in the grace of God. Your growth in grace will require discipline on your part. As a sanctified believer, you will still have human limitations and infirmities. You may still make mistakes and need to develop poise and patience when under pressure.

The good news is you can be set free from the sins of the spirit and live a life pleasing to God. You can now concentrate on daily seeking to be more Christ-like in every area of your life. The possibilities of growing in grace are now unlimited.

Paul makes it clear that the reason a born again believer struggles with the sins of the spirit is because the sinful disposition they inherited from Adam remains in his or her heart. It is the reason they act the way they do. The good news is, if you will completely consecrate your life to God, he will cleanse from your heart this anti-God disposition and fill you with the Holy Spirit. You can be set free from self-centeredness and begin to live a consistent holy life.

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**12. PURSUING HOLINESS - THOMAS HERMIZ**

**Hebrews 12:3-16 (NKJV)**

“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation that speaks to you as to sons:

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,  
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

For whom the LORD loves He chastens,  
And scourges every son whom He receives.'

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

"Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright" (NKJV),

The skeptics believed that running a four-minute mile was humanly impossible.

But on May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister thrilled the world by running a mile in three minutes, fifty-nine and four-tenths seconds. It happened again on June 21, 1954, when John Landry broke that record by running the mile in three minutes, fifty-eight seconds. On August 7, 1954, Roger Bannister and John Landry ran against each other in what was billed as the miracle mile.

With one hundred yards to go Landry was ahead and it appeared he would win the miracle mile. However, Landry became concerned with the question, "Where is Bannister?" He turned to look, staggered just a bit, and Bannister surged past him and won the race in three minutes, fifty-eight and eight-tenths seconds. Landry was under four minutes by four-tenths of a second. Landry said, "If I hadn't turned to look back for Roger I would have won the race." Landry made the mistake of losing his focus and looking back.

The writer to the Hebrews was concerned that the believers would lose their focus, become distracted by the world, and not finish the race strongly. He urged them to keep their eyes on Jesus and continue to pursue holiness.

I am concerned that we have many believers in our holiness churches that need a greater sense of urgency for pursuing holiness of heart and life. Too often we are a mile wide and an inch deep. We seem to be distracted by the secular and the worldly. We are in danger of losing our focus and intense passion to be holy.

If we lose our focus and fail to earnestly pursue holiness, the consequences can be tragic. The writer admonishes us to go on into sanctification. He warns us that a failure to do so could result in four serious consequences. Each of these warnings contains the word, "lest."

### **1. Lest You Become Weary and Discouraged (v. 3).**

The picture here is of a runner who, before he crosses the finish line, collapses on the ground, gasping for breath. The writer is saying, "Don't give up too soon; don't relax until you break the tape. Stay on your feet. Keep focused on the goal all the way to the finish line."

We are then urged to remember the great price the martyrs have paid over the years and the price Christ paid for our redemption. When we compare our struggles and trials with what Christ went thru for us, we should be encouraged. Most of us have never shed our blood for the cause of Christ. Stay focused, don't give up and stay in the race until you cross the finish line.

The Christian life is not a sprint; it's a marathon. One of Satan's favorite weapons is to cause us to grow discouraged, get distracted and to give up. We must remember that Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, was falsely accused, illegally tried, rejected, beaten, battered, bludgeoned, blasphemed, and nailed to an old rugged cross. He shed his blood, laid down his sinless life, and died like a rejected criminal for us.

At this time in our country, we do not face martyrdom. What we must resist is lukewarmness and getting caught up in materialism. Our race is a life and death event. The prize is far more than a gold medal. It is eternal life in the glorious presence of Christ.

The Christian race is not always easy. Satan is out to destroy us any way he can. It is important to keep your eyes on Jesus, stay on your knees, and in the Word. Be faithful to your local church. These basics are simple but vitally important. Continue to earnestly pursue holiness.

### **2. Looking Carefully Lest Anyone Fall Short of the Grace of God (v. 15a).**

In verse fourteen, it is obvious that the writer returns to his thought in verse one when he says, "Let us lay aside every

weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us.” He is reminding us that the one essential qualification for all who would run a successful Christian race is to have their hearts cleansed from its sinful disposition by being entirely sanctified.

The presence of depravity in the heart of the born again believer will stunt one’s growth in grace just as it was doing to the Hebrew believers. This has to be remedied if one is to run a strong race. It is the will of God that every born again believer should be sanctified.

If we do not avail ourselves of the grace God has provided through his Son, we will always be in danger of falling from grace. The surest and quickest way of backsliding is to neglect to go on into holiness.

This is exactly what happened to the church at Ephesus. In Revelation 2:4-5, Christ said they had left their first love. He challenged them, “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

Have you lost your first love? Have you cooled off? You are no match for the disposition of sin that remains in the heart of the un sanctified. It will cause you to drift, lose your joy and falter in the race. You really can’t afford to put it off. My question to you is, “Why would you want to?”

### **3. Lest Any Root of Bitterness Springing Up Cause Trouble and by this Many Be Defiled (v. 15b).**

Bitterness is a cancer that will absolutely destroy you. It is like drinking hemlock. It destroys not only you, but the people around you. It spreads like wildfire. It will sap your energy and come between you and God.

The best way to get rid of bitterness is to seek the deeper cleansing of the blood of Christ in his sanctifying grace. This is one reason why it is imperative for every believer to go on into entire sanctification. Through the power of the Holy Spirit you can be free from all bitterness.

You may think you have a right to be bitter. Your friends might agree that you have a right to be bitter because of the injustices in your life. But bitterness is a sin. Let it go and seek a clean heart.

Our challenge is to keep pursuing holiness and not give in to the worldly influences all around us. When we are hurting, we are very vulnerable to the temptation to give in to bitterness. There is evil, rejection, betrayal and heartache all around us. We must constantly be on guard to avoid bitterness. We must keep our eyes on Jesus and stay focused on the goal of pursuing holiness.

Sometimes people are inclined to think they are not hurting anyone else by being bitter. You can be sure that if you are spewing out bitterness it will defile not only you but some of the people closest to you. You could become a stumbling block to the ones you love the most.

When our daughter died suddenly at age twenty-two, Ella Mae and I noticed how our other children were saying to their friends what they heard us saying to our friends. They were picking up on our attitude. We knew that if we allowed bitterness to come into our hearts it would defile not only us, but also our children. That is too high a price to pay for indulging in bitterness.

### **4. Lest There Be Any Fornicator or Profane Person Like Esau, Who for One Morsel of Food Sold His Birthright (v. 16).**

If one fails to pursue holiness there is always the danger of complete apostasy. To be profane is the opposite of being holy. It describes an unspiritual or godless person. Esau had become so unspiritual he no longer had any spiritual discernment or wisdom. Because he was hungry he never gave a second thought to the consequences of selling his birthright for a piece of meat.

I must warn you that if you allow the disposition of sin, the carnal mind, to remain in your heart, it will eventually assert itself. It will deaden and destroy your spiritual sensibilities until nothing will be sacred to you any longer.

Esau had become a sensual man. His physical appetites controlled him. Later he wept over what he had done, but he did not repent. He lost his spiritual birthright forever. He could never get it back.

Sin has consequences. Even if you repent and are forgiven, you can’t always undo the consequences. If a young man or a young lady commits fornication, if they will repent, God will forgive them. But they will never get back what they gave up.

Words once spoken cannot be recalled. Opportunities once lost are gone forever. If you don’t sow in the spring, you can’t reap in the fall.

Many today are selling their spiritual birthright for secular gain, for the things of sense and time, for the material and the secular. They have become profane. This is always likely to happen if one backs up on light and fails to go on into holiness.

### **Conclusion:**

For all of these reasons and more, you really need to be entirely sanctified. Verse fourteen makes it clear, “Without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt. 5:8). An unholy person would be miserable in heaven. Heaven would be hell for a profane person. There wouldn’t be anyone else like you in heaven. God is holy and an

unholy person would be miserable in his presence. So earnestly pursue holiness of heart and life.

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### 13. CAN WE REALLY LIVE A HOLY LIFE? - RON McCLUNG

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

“Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

In some parts of the church world, the subject of holiness is all but ignored. Some pastors do not preach on this important subject. They say, “There are so many lost people who need to be won to the Lord, we don't have time to emphasize holiness.” They say, “It is a luxury we cannot afford.”

Others do not emphasize holiness because, they say, people may think we are trying to act superior to them. Yet, Jesus, who was the holiest person who ever lived, did not leave the impression that he was talking down to others or manifesting superiority. In fact, “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37 KJV). True holiness is a magnet that attracts, not an attitude that repels.

We need to answer three major questions about living a holy life. 1. Is it explainable? Is there a biblical and reasonable explanation for our emphasis on holiness? 2. Is it attainable? Or are we teaching something that is impossible for the average person? 3. Is it maintainable? Once you are walking in holiness, can you maintain it from day to day?

#### 1. Is a Life of Holiness Explainable?

George Sweeting, former president of Moody Bible Institute, said, “It has often been said that if you can explain it, God didn't do it. The ministry of Jesus and the disciples defied human explanation (John 7:15; Acts 4:13). Left alone, the Christian church should have died centuries ago. The power of the Holy Spirit is the only explanation for its preservation.”

Perhaps the same could be said for holiness. It is a work of the Spirit, so if you can explain it, it isn't a work of God. Yet, if we use good principles of biblical interpretation, we can explain a life of holiness.

The word “sanctify” means:

- To set aside for a holy purpose.
- To cleanse and make pure.

God wants to set us apart for holy purposes: to worship him and to serve him. God also wants to cleanse us within and purify our inner nature, so we are not just called holy, but are indeed holy.

To what extent? “Through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

He wants to cleanse every part of our being:

- The spirit, by which we respond to God.
- The soul, or mind, where we think, feel, and make decisions.
- The body, where we carry out holy thoughts, feelings and decisions.

Think about holiness this way:

#### a. We desire to live a holy life.

There is something winsome, attractive about a wholesome lifestyle. Most people know they need a touch from God to make them holy.

#### b. The Bible declares a holy life.

The Bible contains some 1,100 references to holy, holiness, sanctify, or sanctification, either referring to God's holiness, things consecrated, or the holiness of God's people.

#### c. God determined that we should live a holy life.

“He (God) chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Eph. 1:4).

#### d. Jesus died that we might live a holy life.

“Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood” (Heb. 13:12). He died, not only to save us, but to make us holy through his blood.

e. **The Holy Spirit does the work within us to make us holy.**

“. . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood . . .” (1 Peter 1:2).

The whole Trinity gets involved: God determined it, Jesus died for it, and the Holy Spirit does it through his sanctifying work in our hearts.

Leonard Ravenhill said, “The greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world and make him holy, and then put him back in that unholy world and keep him holy in it.”<sup>16</sup>

**2. Is a Life of Holiness Attainable?**

Just as we cannot save ourselves, we cannot sanctify ourselves, or make ourselves holy. Our holiness is only in Christ. He purchased our holiness at the cross. We are not made holy by good works. Those who believe we are made holy after death sometimes make it sound as though our good works are credited toward holiness.

Only in Christ do we find holiness. As we receive it from him, walk with him, live with him, and remain in him, we are truly sanctified, cleansed, made holy.

Suppose we saw a sailboat on a windy day. Yet the sails are not unfurled. Instead the sailor has his oars out, he is struggling and making no progress. Would we say, “Row harder!”? No, we would say, “Raise your sails!” Only Christ can fill our sails and help us to attain the holiness he has in mind for us.

Yet, we must pursue holiness. Hebrews 12:14 says, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” “Make every effort” means we must zealously pursue holiness.

Consider the British tradition of fox hunting. The hunters don their red caps, their blazers, their hunting boots, mount their favorite steeds, release the hounds, and off they go. Hounds are baying, horses are galloping, until someone shouts, “Tally ho! The fox!”

With that same dogged persistence (pun intended) of a hound after a fox, we must pursue holiness, because it is attainable.

**3. Is a Life of Holiness Maintainable?**

Maintenance is extremely important, whether we’re talking about our homes, lawns, appliances, automobiles, or our spiritual lives.

Years ago, we were privileged to live in a home that had a swimming pool. Our sons were young and loved using it, with supervision, of course. It required regular maintenance, especially in hot weather. If certain chemicals were not added regularly, the pool became contaminated and algae would begin to grow.

We went away for two weeks and asked a neighbor to take care of the pool. We explained how small amounts of chemicals needed to be added every day or two.

When we returned from the trip, we were shocked to see the water had turned black. The weather had turned very hot, and algae had quickly formed in the water. Now it was contaminated and I thought I would have to drain all the water, clean the pool, and put fresh water back in it.

I called the pool company that supplied our chemicals. They assured me it was not necessary to drain the water from the pool. Instead, I needed to shock it with chemicals. If I would put large amounts of chemicals in the pool, watch it carefully for two or three days, and add more if necessary, they assured me all would be well.

We did as instructed. We also prayed, because I was not confident the chemicals would correct such a severe problem. But in three days, the water had turned crystal clear. It was sparkling and clean. It was almost unbelievable.

Why did the water turn black? Because a swimming pool exists in an atmosphere that is full of algae and fungi that will multiply rapidly if conditions are right. Since the weather was hot and no chemicals were added to keep the algae under control, conditions deteriorated rapidly.

We must maintain holiness in a similar way. We live in an atmosphere that will pollute us spiritually unless we regularly maintain our walk with Christ. How do we do this? Through regular doses of fellowship with Christ through prayer, Bible-reading, worship, and regular fellowship with other believers.

If you become lax, all kinds of things will drag you back toward a self-centered, selfish existence. You must keep taking regular doses of those things that counteract sin.

If you find yourself polluted, you may need to shock your way back to health. Surrender your heart to the Lord for a fresh cleansing of his Holy Spirit.

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## **14. BUT NOBODY'S PERFECT! - RON McCLUNG**

### **Matthew 5:43-48**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

One of our big problems in the holiness movement is trying to explain what we mean by Christian perfection. Most people accept the dictionary definition: “flawlessness.” Yet we know we are not flawless.

So we sometimes joke about it:

People who think they are perfect are really hard on those of us who are.

What is a perfectionist? Someone who takes infinite pains – and gives them to others.

The closest to perfection most people ever come is when they fill out a job application form.

But, seriously, what do we mean by the concept of perfection?

#### **1. The Meaning of the Concept of Perfection**

By tracking Greek words for “perfection” through the New Testament, we can find four basic ideas about the meaning of perfection.

##### **a. To mend.**

In Matthew chapter 4, we read about James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in a boat “preparing their nets.” The King James Version says they were “mending their nets.” The word for “preparing” or “mending” is our word for “perfecting.” When we came to the Lord, we were torn or tangled, or both, and needed mending.

In Galatians 6:1, Paul writes, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.” The word for “restore” is our word for “perfect.” It can mean to set a broken bone. God wants to mend us where we’re torn and tangled, and fix us where we were broken.

##### **b. To equip.**

In Ephesians 4:12, we read a brief job description for the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. God gives those persons to the church “. . . to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” The word for “prepare” is our word for “perfect.”

The King James says, “for the perfecting of the saints.” The Revised Standard Version says, “to equip the saints.”

Hebrews 13:20-21 contains a beautiful benediction: “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will . . .”

The word for “equip” is our word for “perfect.” God wants to mend us where we are tangled, torn, and broken. He wants to equip us where we are ill-equipped.

##### **c. To complete.**

###### **1) In experience.**

Amazingly, even Jesus had to be perfected. Truly, he was flawless, but he had to be perfected in experience.

Hebrews 2:10-11 says, “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”

Jesus was already perfect in character, but not in experience. He willingly suffered as you and I do; he experienced hunger, thirst, pain, and temptation. He became complete in experience.

## **2) In perseverance.**

James said, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

The King James says, “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (v. 4).

Experience may be unpleasant. But don’t throw in the towel before you gain everything God wants you to gain out of that experience. If you quit too soon, you short-circuit the process. Hang in there! Persevere! It’s part of the process to complete you – perfect you – in Christ!

## **3) In love.**

John wrote, “If anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him” (1 John 2:5). “Complete” is our word for “perfect.”

John also said, “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. . . . In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:12, 17-18).

Did you notice the references to “made complete” and “made perfect”? Is there anyone you are having trouble loving? So, are you saying you are not yet complete in love? That’s why we are in this perfecting process.

### **d. To mature.**

Paul told the Corinthians: “We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’ – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:6-10a).

To be mature means to be able to grasp spiritual concepts. Some cannot do that because their thinking is too earthly. Either they do not have God’s Spirit within or are not open to his direction.

The writer to the Hebrews, challenged his readers to mature, since they should have been teachers but were still learning elementary truths. He said, “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity . . .” (Hebrews 5:14-6:1a).

In other words, we should grow up. Let’s not be guilty of acting like babies, pouting and fussing and expressing our immaturity.

## **2. Mistakes That are Consistent with Perfection**

What mistakes are consistent with perfection, as the Bible defines it?

### **a. In knowledge.**

For centuries people believed Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to the earth. But Galileo came along in 1589, climbed to the top of the leaning Tower of Pisa, where he simultaneously pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same time, proving Aristotle was wrong. But belief in conventional wisdom was so strong that for years, some professors denied what they had seen and continued to declare Aristotle was right.

That kind of close-mindedness will always distort knowledge. At best our knowledge is imperfect. But at least with a teachable spirit, we can improve.

### **b. In judgment.**

During the Civil War, Union Major General John Sedgwick stood up at the battle of Spotsylvania. His men warned him to be careful, but he protested, “Nonsense! They couldn’t hit an elephant at this distance.”<sup>17</sup>

Even if we have a cleansed heart, we can make mistakes in judgment.

### **c. In achievement.**

Suppose a grandfather received a letter from his 18-month old grandchild. At that age, the letter would not likely be very intelligible. But suppose the parents assisted with the scribbled note that said, “I love you, Grandpa.” Doubtless the grandfather would cherish the letter – not because it was perfect, but because of the motive with which it was sent.

Our achievements are likewise imperfect.

### 3. Motives in Our Crusade for Perfection

Just as the grandfather would look at the motive of his grandson's heart, so God looks at our hearts. What must our motives be?

#### a. To please God.

Dennis Kinlaw tells the story of a young boy who helped his father harvest onions. After they were finished, while the boy was off doing something else, the father planted more onions. The boy came along later, saw some shoots, and thought he and his father had missed some plants, so he picked them all. The father became very angry at the lad, but had to admit that the boy's motive was right – he was trying to please his father.

We don't always do everything perfectly, but God will look at our motives more than our performance.

#### b. To be like Jesus.

A graduate student spent a few months with an Indian tribe, trying to understand their customs. When the time to leave, the student had grown particularly fond of one elderly grandmother and hated to tell her goodbye. She took his face in her hands and said, "I like me better when I'm with you."

Don't you feel that way about Jesus? He brings out the best in us.

#### c. To help others.

Management authority Peter Drucker, after analyzing a corporation, asked its executives: "What do you do that justifies your being on the payroll?"

The majority answered in terms of what they were in charge of or how many people worked for them. Only a few answered in terms of "it's my job to give our managers the information they need to make the right decisions" or "I am responsible to find out what products the customer will want tomorrow."

Drucker said the person who stresses downward authority "is a subordinate no matter how exalted his title and rank." The person who stresses making a contribution in the best interest of the company, "no matter how junior, is, in the most literal sense of the phrase, 'top management.'"<sup>18</sup>

One of our motives in the crusade for perfection is to help others.

### Conclusion:

John Wesley's favorite way to explain Christian perfection was in terms of perfect love: "Let love not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant temper of your soul. See that your heart be filled at all times, and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence; not to those only that love *you*, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart; let it sparkle in your eyes; let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love; and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness."<sup>19</sup>

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### Addendum

Church of the Nazarene article of faith:

#### **X. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification\***

We believe that [entire] sanctification is [that] *the* [act] work of God, subsequent to regeneration, [by] which *transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son.*

*We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.*

*It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.*

*Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by grace through faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.*

*This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as "Christian perfection," "perfect*

love,” “heart purity,” “the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit,” “the fullness of the blessing,” and “Christian holiness.”

We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the *divine* impulse to grow in grace as a *Christlike disciple*. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one’s witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

*Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor.*

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9)

(“Christian perfection,” “perfect love”: Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18)

“Heart purity”: Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3

“Baptism with *or infilling of* the Holy Spirit”: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9

“Fullness of the blessing”: Romans 15:29

“Christian holiness”: Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15; Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21)

\*Constitutional changes adopted by the 2009 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies at the time of posting. Where changes are being made, words in italics are new words. Words in brackets [ ] are being deleted.

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# Notes

[←1]

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