

Love Triumphant Over Original Sin

by Daniel Steele

The sermon discusses the nature of original sin, the conquest of love over sin, and the need for a positive and unlimited work of God for entire sanctification.

Scripture: John 3:8, Acts 3:26, 1 Corinthians 3:1, Galatians 5:17, 1 John 3:8

Topics: "Original Sin", "Sanctification"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the concept of inbred sin, inherited from Adam, as the state of heart from which acts of sin flow. He discusses the struggle believers face with inbred sin even after justification, emphasizing the need for continual reliance on Jesus Christ as our advocate. Steele refutes the idea of complete sanctification at the moment of regeneration, highlighting the ongoing battle between the flesh and the Spirit in believers. He argues against the belief that sin is entirely eradicated at rebirth, pointing to the universal Christian experience of struggling with sinful tendencies even after conversion.

Transcript

The spirit of sin, or inbred sin, technically called original sin, because it is inherited from Adam, is the state of heart out of which acts of sin either actually flow or tend to flow. Until this state is changed, the conquest of love over the soul is incomplete. Regeneration introduces a power which checks the out breaking of original into actual sin, except occasional and almost involuntary sallies in moments of weakness or unwatchfulness. These are a source of grief and condemnation to the Justified soul. They are a humiliating, yet only temporary defeat. For there is with all well instructed believers a resort to the blood of sprinkling, and a pleading of the promise, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We do not say that all justified persons experience these defeats. All may, and some doubtless do, live without condemnation from the glad moment of pardon; yet the testimony of the Church shows that these are rare exceptions. The majority, in the struggle with inbred sin, are not always victorious. What is the difference then, between sin in a sinner, and sin in a believer? The same difference that there is between poison in a rattlesnake and the virus of that serpent injected into a healthy man. The venom is natural to the reptile. He delights in it, secretes and cherishes it with pleasure. But all the vital forces of the man resist the injected poison, and rally to thrust it out of the system. We have shown elsewhere that the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was not designed by St. Paul as an ideal of the regenerate life, even in its lowest stages. But so true is the doctrine of sin in believers-inbred sin-sometimes breaking out against the enfeebled will, that a whole section of the Christian world have mistaken the struggles of an awakened legalist seeking Justification by good works, and failing through

the ascendancy of depraved inclination, for the portrait of the Christian in his best estate in this life. This photograph of a Christless, convicted Jew, has, alas! been set before myriads of Christians as the masterpiece of that Jesus who came to save his people from their sins, the best specimen of his art as a Divine limner even when aided by the great transformer, the Holy Spirit.

This class of Christians do not need arguments to convince them of the possible existence of sin in believers. It is difficult for them to believe that they may live on the earth after sin is all destroyed. Since nature abhors a vacuum in the spiritual as in the physical world, the complete and permanent annihilation of sin as a state of heart must be attended by the infusion of perfect love, by which we mean love in a degree commensurate with the utmost capacity of the soul. Hence the coup de grace, the deathblow which ends the war of love against sin, is a negative and limited work, to be followed by a work positive and unlimited. The first is the removal of all impurity, whether inherent or acquired; the second is being "filled with all the fullness of God." It is the adorning of the soul with all the fruit of the Spirit-love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, patience, and temperance. Since there are some who believe that the negative work, and destruction of the very spirit of sin, or proclivity toward sin, takes place when the soul is born again, we will briefly present our objections to this doctrine.

1. It is contrary to universal Christian experience. In all ages and in all Christian lands, always and everywhere, resounds the wail of truly regenerate souls over the antagonisms of Divine love discovered in them under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In passing from death unto life they have passed into a conflict not only with the world and Satan, but also with the flesh-the perverse tendencies of their own natures. Now one of three things must be true. Either these have all made a mistake in calling themselves regenerate, or they have all backslidden from a regenerate state, or they are truly regenerate while struggling with the remains of the carnal mind. To insist that the first is true is to assert the delusion of the whole body of believers in respect to the most vital point-sonship to God. To assume the second supposition is to declare the apostasy of the Church in each of its members very soon after conversion an-appalling hypothesis. The third alternative saves the Church from the theories of delusion and of apostasy, and is in perfect harmony with universal testimony.

2. It contradicts the creed of all the orthodox branches of the Church universal from primitive Christianity to the present day. The Greek and the Roman, the Anglican, and every reformed Church of Europe and America, agree that there is an infection of nature remaining in them that are regenerated. Augustine and Calvin are not stronger in their assertion of this fact than are Arminius and Wesley.¹ It is no small presumption in favor of the truth of a doctrine, that it has remained unquestioned through all the fierce battles of polemical theologians, and all the reforms of the Church, and all the restatements of Christian truth. Fragmentary sects may for a time dissent from the orthodox opinion, and either pass away or return again to the common faith, as did Count Zinzendorf and his Moravian followers in London, in the last century. For a time, these excellent people taught the entire sanctification of the soul in the moment of the new birth. But so contradictory was this view to their own experience, and so destructive of confidence in Christ on the part of weak believers, that it was at length abandoned.

So strongly have believers since the Apostolic age been impressed with the imperfect cure of the soul in regeneration, that many have believed that the entire healing must be deferred either till death, or purgatorial fires shall complete the purification.

3. It is unphilosophical. The deeper the stain the greater must be the power of the chemicals applied to remove it. The blood of Christ is the cleansing power. The degree of efficacy is proportional to the faith of

the individual. No faith, no purification; perfect trust, complete cleansing. Is it reasonable that this perfect trust should be exercised by an awakened sinner in his first apprehension of Jesus Christ? Is it philosophical to assert that one filled with doubts, and weakened and appalled by the terrors of the Lord thundering from Mount Sinai, will then put forth his highest act of faith? We aver that it is far more reasonable to suppose that the highest capacity of faith is attained after much exercise. If the confidence of man in man is a plant of slow growth, it is natural that the highest confidence of man in God should require time for its maturity. It is certainly not unreasonable that there should be two distinct operations of the Holy Spirit to neutralize the sin in our nature, which has a twofold source-the soul's own sinful acts, and the sin of Adam injecting a stream of corruption into humanity.

The most modern statement and defense of this erroneous doctrine is found in the "Moral Philosophy" of Dr. Fairchild, President of Oberlin College. In his chapter on the "Unity or Simplicity of Moral Action," he elaborates an argument to prove that virtue, wherever it exists, is entire and complete, with no mixture of impurity; and that there is room only for its more firm establishment, persistency, and fortification by habit. He answers the testimony of multitudes of immature Christians to the consciousness of a mixed state of sin and holiness, by asserting that these do not co-exist, but they succeed each other very rapidly. "The general impression of deficient goodness is admitted; and the fact of deficiency is also admitted; but it is a deficiency which arises from the alternation of good and evil in the heart." He explains away the consciousness of good and evil by asserting that "it is not so definite as to discriminate between these two forms of mixture," namely, concomitancy and alternation. Just here we are impelled to ask whether Christ Jesus has any immediate salvation from the mixture of alternation? Whatever the kind of mixture, it needs purifying. Are the lapse of time and the slow formation of virtuous habits the only saviour? We apprehend that the answer will be, that habit is our only redeemer from this wretched state; that the same embarrassment surrounds the new creation of the soul as, according to Bishop Butler, attended the creation of Adam -- the impossibility of creating a being with good habits. According to the Oberlin theory of the perfect purity of the soul after regeneration, the distinctive work of the Sanctifier is no more needed, Henceforth He should be called the Confirmer. But this would be a misnomer, for the soul must, by the very signification of habit, establish itself by repeated virtuous acts.

Dr. Fairchild's theory contradicts the consciousness of multitudes of such minds as are able to discriminate between concomitancy and alternation; even when they testify to the presence of a felt antagonism within themselves disturbing their peace and filling them with grief. The theory involves the false assumption of Dugald Stewart, that mind is capable of only a single action at one instant of time -- that we hear only one note of the piano, and see only one point in the landscape, at one and the same instant -- and that the apparent variety of sounds and vastness of landscape is due to the rapidity with which the mind passes from sound to sound only apparently co-existent, and the eye unconsciously passes from point to point in the landscape. This is shown by Sir William Hamilton to be erroneous. He demonstrates that the mind may, with abated force, follow two or three trains of thought at the same time.

4. But our chief objection to this doctrine is its unscriptural character. St. Paul is addressing believers, and portraying their character, when he writes, Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These are contrary the one to the other." If the Apostle had been writing to counteract this modern error which confounds two distinct operations of the Spirit, regeneration and sanctification, he could not have more expressly antagonized it than he has in this passage. For he asserts that even in the regenerate there is warfare between two opposing principles; and the aim of the epistle is to end the contest by the complete ascendancy of the Spirit, and the extinction of the flesh or evil nature.

But one passage of Scripture effectually demolishes this theory of the complete sanctification of the soul in the new birth. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." 1 Cor. 3:1. These brethren, babes in Christ, could not be styled wholly or predominantly, spiritual in their state, for St. Paul is speaking of their state, and not of their acts, which are described in the third verse. They had been born into the kingdom by the Holy Spirit, because they are styled babes in Christ, and addressed as brethren; and in the salutation (Chap. 1:2) they are styled "saints," or holy ones. Nevertheless St. Paul, with his utmost stretch of charity, cannot truthfully call them spiritual, that is, perfectly holy, for their old fleshly nature was too strongly manifesting itself. Here acts of sin cannot be said to alternate with acts of holiness, for St. Paul is not yet speaking of what they do but of what they are, and they are co-existently, carnal and babes in Christ. Dr. Edward Robinson in the earlier editions of his "New Testament Greek Lexicon," endeavored to tone down this apparent contradiction in terms by inventing a softened meaning to *Sarkikois*, carnal, in this verse and in the third, as being merely "weak, frail, imperfect," and not "implying sinfulness." But it was so evident that this definition originated in the author's dogmatical opinions, and not in the principles of sound lexicography, that in his last revision he abandoned this definition of the term as applied to persons.

We have dwelt at length on this mischievous identity of entire sanctification with justification in point of time,

1. Because it tends to make young Christians abandon their trust in Christ when they discover sin still lurking within.
2. Those who do hold fast to Christ are by this doctrine excluded from seeing the great and glorious privilege of full salvation attainable on earth, and are left to a low and mixed spiritual state.
3. The census of the Christian Church in all the world would be reduced from millions to units. For, if this doctrine be true, we must count as regenerate only such as experienced entire sanctification in the new birth. John Wesley, who, from his extensive travels, and practice of personal inspection of his societies by searching questions, had a wider acquaintance with experimental Christians than any other man since the days of St. Paul, is a competent witness on this point. "But we do not know a single instance in any place," says Wesley², "of a person's receiving in one and the same moment remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, a clean heart." If Wesley, in his more than fourscore years, never met with such a person, it is safe to say that their number at any one time in the Church universal could be counted on one's fingers.

Admitting that the dominion of sin is broken while its being still remains after the love of God, the new seed of divine life, is implanted in the heart, we proceed to show that there is a salvation from original sin in this life. All admit that sin must all be destroyed before we can enter the abodes of the saints in light. This purification cannot take place after death without involving the papal purgatory. If it is done in the moment of death, it makes the king of terrors the complete Saviour. To avoid both of these absurdities we must believe that we are to be entirely sanctified in this life.

Before the Son of God came in the flesh, a name indicative of his great work was prepared for him, and prophetically announced by the angel. That name was a heroic name in the Hebrew annals, and resonant of victory -- Joshua, Saviour. He was not to save politically, but individually, not from Roman power, but from servility to sin. "He shall save his people from their sins." In the promise, His in the Greek lacks the emphasis which would have confined it to the Jews. The word sins here signifies not punishment merely,

"but is the sin itself -- the practice of sin in its most pregnant sense."

Dean Alford, by the use of this strong term pregnant, evidently means sin in embryo, the state of heart out of which acts of sin are born: "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth the sin." Jesus will save not only from the birth, but from the conception of sin, by lust entering in with its defilement. That this is the correct exegesis of this Scripture will be evident by attending to Peter's discourse in Solomon's Porch, in which he interprets the mission of Christ, "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Acts 3:26. Bengel's comment sets this great blessing in its true light: "He turns away both us from wickedness and ungodliness (ungodlikeness) from us." He turns us away from committing sin, and removes from us the aptitude for wickedness. The sense in which we have used the term aptitude will soon be explained. But as if to put forever beyond dispute the purpose of the incarnation, and to point out the summits of Christian privilege so far as relates to sin, St. John says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8.

Pre-eminently the work of the devil is to produce a state of alienation from God. The first work of Satan on earth was to induce in Eve a state of distrust toward her Creator. Plucking the forbidden fruit was her act. The aptitude for this act was formed actively by Satan's artful insinuations, and passively by Eve in listening to them. To destroy the chief and crowning work of the devil, is to redeem man from this very aptitude. "Depravity of all consists in this, that in all alike is the capacity for the extremest wickedness.

And it is redemption even from that capacity that man needs."³ The term capacity is not to be confounded with possibility. It was possible for Adam to sin, but he must first acquire a capacity or aptitude for it by listening to those suggestions which weakened faith and chilled the ardor of love. George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards did not have in their Christian maturity the capacity to rob a bank, though it was possible for them, under the subtle power of temptation, to have admitted by imperceptible degrees the spirit of avarice, and to have so far fallen from faith in God, the great sheet-anchor of all true rectitude, so as to have taken on that capacity for burglary.

This explains the declaration of St. John, that he that is born of God sinneth not; "For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." John, having in mind one in whom the work of regeneration has been fully accomplished by the perfection of the regenerating principle of love, asserts the incapacity or Inaptitude of such a soul, while abiding in Christ, to commit a known and willful sin.

We conclude our argument on this point by an examination of the assertion that in regeneration the soul is entirely sanctified because the new birth is a Divine work, and God's works are always perfect. Often we hear the declaration that when God regenerates the penitent believer he does it thoroughly; there is no half-finished work proceeding from the hand of the perfect and omnipotent Artist. Now it does not follow that because God is perfect, every thing that comes from him must be perfect also. Look abroad through nature and you will find many imperfections -- de-formed animals, trees gnarled and twisted, in high latitudes pines dwarfed to mere ferns, in all climes abortive blossoms and windfall fruits and children born with poisonous humors in their blood, or incipient tubercles in their lungs. God's works are always perfect where the conditions are perfect. He does not produce perfect oranges in Alaska, nor perfect apples in Florida, nor models of human stature in Lapland, nor Caucasian fairness of complexion in Africa. It is thus in His spiritual kingdom. Perfect saints are developed only under appropriate conditions -- perfect faith in Jesus Christ, evinced by an entire surrender to his will. But as the wonderful creative tendency of God

waits not for perfect conditions, but breaks forth into forms of weakness and deformity in the natural world, so the amazing love of God does not wait for perfect spiritual conditions, but puts forth its beneficent activities, re-suiting in a prodigal wastefulness in its wayside sowings, in its stony ground crop, which makes no show in the bushel, and in its thorny ground harvest which sends no sheaf to the garner. Where faith in Christ is weak, a feeble spiritual life is the inevitable result. But when faith grasps him as an omnipotent Saviour, the uttermost salvation from sin is the consequence, and Christian manhood walks forth upon the earth in the fullness of Christ. All spiritual transformations result from the combination of two forces, the Divine and the human. Where the human is defective the resultant will be imperfect, for the Divine agency will not compensate the defects of the human co-operation. Hence the weakness of man is reflected upon the almightiness of God. Sons are born into his family having still the taint of depravity lurking in their blood, to be purged away by the cathartic of a mighty faith in the all-cleansing blood of "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/love-triumphant-over-original-sin/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net