

# Sanctification Up to Knowledge

by Daniel Steele

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus Christ as the only condition for salvation and the role of knowledge in sanctification, highlighting that God can sanctify a soul with little knowledge and that faith precedes knowledge in the natural order of spiritual progress.*

**Scripture:** Acts 10:34, Romans 2:13, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 3:19, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Peter 1:3

**Topics:** "Saving Faith", "Entire Sanctification"

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## Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the immovable rock of faith in Jesus Christ as the foundation of salvation, emphasizing that knowledge is not a condition for salvation but a knowledge of Christ is implied in saving faith. He discusses the Wesleyan theory of entire sanctification, highlighting the need for self-knowledge and faith for purity to be attained. Steele explains the continuous need for sanctification as believers grow in knowledge and judgment, leading to a more perfect manifestation of inner purity in their outer lives. He delves into the surpassing love of Christ that goes beyond human comprehension and self-knowledge, emphasizing God's power to do exceedingly abundantly above all that believers can ask or think.

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## Transcript

THIS the author regards as the immovable rock on which his book is built. The only condition on which we are saved is such a faith in Jesus Christ as works by love, overcomes the world, and purifies the heart. Knowledge is not a condition of salvation, except as a knowledge of Christ, the object of faith, is implied in saving faith. The great mercy of God is shown in the fact that he can save a soul that has very little knowledge, where there is an obedient attitude of the will. On this ground pious pagans, following the starlight of natural religion to the best of their abilities, while ignorant of the historic Christ, "are saved by Christ though they know him not," as Wesley taught. This doctrine is formulated by Dr. Whedon thus: "Pagans having the spirit of faith and the purpose of righteousness; are accepted of God." This means that they who are disposed to receive Christ, the object of faith, were he presented to them, and to walk by God's law were it revealed to them in his book, are saved -- as both Peter and Paul teach (Acts x, 34; Rom. ii, 13-15). Hence our theology needs no extension of probation after death to give the heathen and infants a knowledge of Christ.

God can also entirely sanctify a believing soul having very little knowledge. When he realizes that there is in him an antagonism to the new life, and that there is within the reach of his faith a power which can remove that antagonism at once, and totally, he has knowledge sufficient for his entire sanctification. The

evil in man, though taking on many forms -- such as pride, malice, envy, etc. has one root, with various names -- "the old man," "the flesh," and "the sin which so easily besets," which Delitzsch calls "sin as inward inclination, an indwelling evil." It is the Wesleyan theory that these may all be destroyed at once in the removal of this indwelling evil without presenting each form of depravity separately to be burned up by the purifying Spirit.

It is the theory of this book that each of these must be revealed to the consciousness, and that a distinct "empowering" be imparted for its suppression. These successive empowerings are sanctifications up to knowledge; and as we increase in the knowledge of these inward evils, and never know whether they have all been revealed to the inner eye, we can never be sure that we are wholly sanctified. This theory is supposed to be confirmed by the fact that these evils are not removed at regeneration, because they are not then known. This is an assumption without proof. Paul said of his pre-Christian state, "I am carnal." Wicked men convicted by the Spirit know the evil of their natures as well as they know their past sins. They are not then delivered from their depravity, from any lack of knowledge, but from a lack of the requisite degree of faith. God in great mercy does not require a faith which grasps at once both pardon and purity. Faith for purity is a much higher attainment than faith for pardon, an effort requiring a taste of love divine and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, revealing the greatness of his sanctifying grace. Then and then only will faith be able to grasp the prize. How much easier it is for one who already loves God and is acquainted with his "exceeding great and precious promises" to exercise strong faith in him, than it is for a sinner cowering beneath a sense of his wrath. Should justifying faith be represented by one, and that figure represent his whole ability, and sanctifying faith by nine, and should God require both at once, he would be requiring tenfold more than the penitent sinner can render. Let us thank God for the discovery made by two young men at Oxford that "men are justified before they are sanctified." They found no command to the wicked to be sanctified, but to repent, to believe, and be forgiven. They found no promise of sanctifying grace to the unregenerate, but the new birth by the Holy Spirit.

Again, when we turn to the Holy Scriptures, we nowhere find knowledge and sanctification associated together as antecedent and consequent. Paul says much about epignosis full and certain knowledge, as the result of purging the inner eye of film, and the sequence of the revealing power of the Spirit in the fullness of his indwelling. The natural order in the Scriptures is the same as that in mental philosophy -- faith is the pathway to knowledge. Faith in Christ precedes a knowledge of forgiveness. It is true also that we must know a man in order to put the highest confidence in him. But the order of spiritual progress emphasizes faith as the principal condition. "I know whom I have believed."

The logic of this work is this: God waits for believers to get knowledge, chiefly self-knowledge, before he sanctifies. But since men never get perfect knowledge, they are never in this life perfectly sanctified. Since they daily increase in knowledge, they daily need sanctification up to the last increment of knowledge. We infer from the Scriptures that God waits for a degree of faith which only one who loves God can exercise. This is the reason why justification and entire sanctification are not simultaneous.

After entire sanctification the normal order is a growth in knowledge and judgment, and a more and more perfect manifestation of the inner purity in the outer life; a progressive development in practical holiness, while the inner principle grows stronger and stronger.

Moreover, we do not find in the Bible any such limitation of the work of the sanctifying Spirit to the narrow range of human knowledge. We read that it is possible for the believer "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii, 19), surpassing not only our ability to comprehend, but also overleaping the

boundaries of self-knowledge, and going down into the unexplored depths of our nature with its cleansing power. For love is the element in which holiness dwells. Love is the kingly noun in the universe, and holiness is the peerless adjective which describes it. Paul adds to his prayer this ascription : "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; " literally, "able to do superabundantly above the greatest abundance." Well does Adam Clarke ask: "Of what consequence would it be to tell the Church of God that he had power to do so and so if there were not implied an assurance that he will do what his power can, and what the soul of man needs to have done?" The most pressing need of the regenerated soul is perfect deliverance from the evil in his nature. Paul says that God is able to do above all our thinking, and not merely up to our knowledge. The same large view of the possibilities of grace is seen in these words: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," in the glories of a present experience, as a foretaste of the glories of heaven to which some people erroneously limit this entire text, putting it out of harmony with the context. This text shows that God's grace is not limited by the believer's knowledge.

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