

St. Paul Invents Stronger Words for Complete Deliverance From Sin.

by Daniel Steele

St. Paul invented new words to express the completeness of individual sanctification, emphasizing the importance of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:15, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Colossians 2:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Sanctification", "Biblical Language"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the unique selection of the Greek language to convey the gospel, highlighting the avoidance of words tainted with impurity and the creation of new terms to express profound truths of Christianity. He focuses on the invented words by St. Paul to emphasize the thoroughness of the Spirit's work in sanctification, such as 'apekdusis' in Colossians 2:11 and 'holoteleis' in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Steele delves into the significance of these words in portraying the complete separation from sin and the holistic sanctification of believers in spirit, soul, and body.

Transcript

When the gospel came into the world as a message from God, it selected one of the many languages of men for the communication and preservation of its revelation of truth. The Greek tongue was honored by being chosen as the golden pitcher in which to convey down the ages the water of life to a thirsty and dying world. But some words had become so steeped in sensuality that they could not be used. They carried such a savor of impurity about them that the Holy Spirit abstained from bringing the truth of God into polluting contact with them. One of the three verbs signifying "to love" had become so saturated with lustful ideas that it was utterly unsuitable to express the holy love which is the central principle of Christianity. Hence it and its derivatives were rejected. In some instances new words were coined, as the noun *agape*, love, which is not found in the so-called profane writers.

It is our purpose in our course of Greek Testament readings now begun to limit our researches to those changes and inventions in the language which followed the day of Pentecost. The study of the newly coined words will be specially instructive, as showing very plainly what truths of the gospel are so far above natural religion and Mosaism as to require newly created forms of expression. We will endeavor to make ourselves intelligible to the non-Greek reader. As it will be necessary to indicate the word under criticism, we will write it in English letters. Our present reading will set forth the words invented by St. Paul

to express the thoroughness of the Spirit's work in entire sanctification. It would seem that the inspired apostle foresaw the future denial of this vital truth in nearly every age of the church, and he determined to fortify it with the strongest possible terms in the Greek, and to strengthen these terms by putting them together in novel compound words.

Col. 2:11 contains a notable instance of strengthening his assertion of the completeness of the cleansing of the believer, by the invention of a noun found nowhere else in the whole range of Greek literature. The word is *apekdisis*, "putting off the body of the flesh" (R. V.), not "of the sins" of the flesh, as in the A. V., which is a gloss teaching deliverance from sinning. The R. V. teaches the greater deliverance from the sin-principle or tendency called original sin. Let us scrutinize Paul's invented compound noun, made up of two prepositions, *apo* and *ek*, and the verb *duo*, all signifying the putting off and laying aside, as a garment, an allusion to actual circumcision. Meyer's comment shows the strength of this word: "Whereas the spiritual circumcision divinely performed consisted in a complete parting and doing away with this body [of sin], in so far as God, by means of this ethical circumcision, has taken off and removed the sinful body from man [the two acts are expressed by the double compound], like a garment drawn off and laid aside." The italics are Meyer's. If this does not mean the complete and eternal separation of depravity, like the perpetual effect of cutting off and casting away the foreskin then it is impossible to express the idea of entire cleansing in any human language. This radical change of nature from sinful to holy is effected "by or by means of, the circumcision of Christ," i.e., which is produced through Christ by the agency of the Holy Spirit, procured by him. We do not accept the suggestion of Meyer that this Christian transformation is represented in its ideal aspect. God does not tantalize his children with unattainable ideals. He does not command perfection where it cannot be realized through his grace. He is not a hard master, reaping perfection where he has sown only imperfection. "His commandments are not grievous."

1 Thess. 5:23 is a text which implies that the regenerate are not entirely purified, and that they may be in answer to prayer. This implies that it is in this life. The expanded "amen" after this prayer "Faithful is he that calleth you. who will also do it," is a declaration that it is God, and not death, who is the author of this work. There is an important word, *holoteleis*, which is found nowhere else in the New Testament nor in the Septuagint. It is an adjective in form with an adverbial meaning (Kuhner, 264.3). If Paul intended to pray that the Thessalonians might all be sanctified, there were three everyday adjectives which he might have used to express "all." He employed this unique term, meaning "wholly to the end." or "quite completely," because he had realized in his own experience the uttermost sanctification, and he saw that it was the privilege of every believer. This rare and peculiar word is rendered in the Vulgate *per omnia*, "in your collective powers and parts." "Marking," says Ellicott, "more emphatically that thoroughness and pervasive holiness which the following words specify with further exactness." He thus translates it: "But may the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved whole without blame in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." A Greek version of the Old Testament was made by Aquila in which this word occurs in Deut. 13:16, to express the idea of "every whit." We have been explicit in defining this word as indicating the completeness of individual sanctification which is presently presented in detail, and not the cleansing of the totality of the Thessalonian church -- may God sanctify you all. Of course the apostle's prayer for the entire purification of the individual includes every individual in the church.

But there is another word in this verse that occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in James 1:4. It is *holoklaron*, "whole," an emphatic predicate referring to all three following substantives -- spirit, soul, and body. The SPIRIT is the highest and distinctive part of man, his real personality, responsible and

naturally immortal, whereby we are receptive of the Holy Spirit through saving faith in Jesus Christ. In the unregenerate it is crushed down and subordinated to the animal soul, the seat of the passions and desires which we have in common with the brutes. The next component of man, for the entire sanctification of which Paul prays, is the body, the material envelope of the immaterial personality and its animal propensities. He says much in his epistles about the sanctification of the body, "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ? Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost? glorify God therefore in your body." -- 1 Cor. 6:15-20, R. V. The body is sanctified wholly when its members are used by the rectified will only "as instruments of righteousness unto God." Paul in this detailed sanctification leaves no more place for sin continuing till death than he does in 2 Cor. 7:1, where "all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit" is to be cleansed in the act of "perfecting holiness." This word for "whole" which Paul has used only in this place signifies intact, possessing all that belongs to it, and having nothing superfluous. Sin is an excrescence. a deformity which this particular word excludes.

In conclusion, on this point we would say that the spirit is preserved blameless in its wholeness when the voice of truth always rules it; the soul when it resists all the charms of the senses; and, lastly, the body when it is not abused as the instrument of shameful actions.

Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost," etc. The Greek for "uttermost" is *panteles*. This is the only place in the New Testament where it is used, except negatively, "in no wise," in Luke 13:11.

It is a strong compound word. meaning "all to the end." The R. V., margin, is "completely." This is its true meaning "perfectly, completely, to the very end" says Delitzsch. "but without necessarily any reference to time." Again he says, "Christ is able to save in every way, in all respects, unto the uttermost; so that every want and need, in all its breadth and depth. is utterly done away." This annotation is a perfect answer to his argument in his Biblical psychology in proof of 'the unabolished antinomy' in Rom. 7. "The law in the members" warring until death against the law of the mind, and bringing the Christian at his best earthly estate into captivity to the law or uniform sway of sin. Let us believe the exegete rather than the theologian. It is always safer to trust an honest and scholarly expounder than a warped and traditional dogmatist. Modern interpreters unanimously reject the idea of some of the ancient annotators that "uttermost" has here reference to illimitable future time. Besides being unscholarly, this view involves the heresy of Canon Farrar's "eternal hope" for wicked souls after death.

Why was Paul constrained to invent these new and strong terms? Because he was divinely called to describe what never existed before Pentecost, and for that reason had no name -- human souls entirely sanctified through the mission of the Comforter. Why did he not do the same wonderful works before Pentecost, seeing that as God he was omnipresent and omnipotent? He had not the same tools to work with, the completed facts of the gospel ending with the ascension of Christ from the footstool to the throne. "Sanctify them through the truth."

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