

The Spirit Gives No Testimony to Perfected Holiness

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele argues for the necessity of the Holy Spirit's witness in affirming entire sanctification and personal purity within the Christian faith.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 1:18, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:12, Galatians 5:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the witness of the Holy Spirit to entire sanctification, emphasizing that while there may not be specific Scriptures mentioning this witness, the Spirit's direct testimony is essential for understanding acts like pardon and heart purity. He challenges objections by highlighting the Spirit's role in revealing personal truths like conviction of sin, call to ministry, and guidance for spiritual development, which cannot be solely found in the Bible. Steele encourages believers to seek the Spirit's guidance in life's perplexities, acknowledging the importance of consciousness as a witness to Christian purity.

Transcript

The objection is made to the Wesleyan doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the fact of entire sanctification, that there is no Scripture which specifically mentions such a witness. To this we reply that this proves too much. There is in the Bible no specific witness of the Spirit to justification by faith or the pardon of sins. We are surprised at this, because pardon is an act taking place in the mind of God. It can be known only by the direct testimony of the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God. Myriads have received this testimony direct from the throne of God by the voice of the Spirit. I have yet to hear the first Methodist discredit it, because he could quote no text of Scripture expressly certifying that this is an office of the Spirit. But it may be said that the witness of the Spirit to adoption into the family of God so strongly implies pardon that we are justified in asserting that it includes pardon. May we not also, with equally good reason, insist that the permanent, conscious incoming of the Spirit implies a conscious, thorough house cleaning? Jesus said of the promised Paraclete: "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Shall we not know his works also? Again, we have never seen a valid objection to Wesley's use of I Cor. ii, 12, as including the witness to heart purity inwrought by the Spirit: "Now we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." This use of the plural "things" implies that the Spirit attests facts other than adoption.

It is asserted in this book that the extension of the revealing power of the Holy Spirit or his testimony beyond the one fact of adoption opens the door to all kinds of fanaticism. But the universal Church -- papal, Greek, and Protestant, at least all which ordain their ministry by bishops -- asks this question: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of the ministry in the Church of Christ?" What is this but the Spirit's witness to a fact, the fact of a call? Does this promote fanaticism? If so, the Church from the apostolic age has been breeding fanatics. The celebrated English preacher, R. L. Horton, in his Yale lectures, tells the theological students in true Quaker style that, unless they by the Holy Spirit get their message from the mouth of God every time they preach, they have no business in the pulpit. Does that promote fanaticism? This advice, if followed, would make mighty men in the pulpit. If our Church could get that kind of preaching she could afford to risk an occasional fanatic.

My conclusion is that all truth necessary to salvation is found in the Bible, but that all facts a personal nature, such as conviction of sin, pardon, entire sanctification, call to the ministry, and the message demanded by the occasion and the duty of the hour, where duties apparently conflict, facts which could not have been revealed in the Bible, are revealed by the Holy Spirit in answer to the prayer of faith. If in saying this I am called a fanatic I accept the epithet, thankful that I am counted worthy to suffer this reproach.

The Church owes much to men who while living bore that name. There is a call for more of the same sort. Paul asserts that "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It is alleged that our doctrine, that facts necessary to our own highest spiritual development and usefulness may be indicated to us by the guiding Spirit, opens a wide door for fanaticism. It would were there no safeguards, such as a diligent study of the Bible, and a conformity of our conduct to its principles, a use of our God-given reason, a regard for providential indications, and believing prayer. He who thus does and then trusts God for the guidance of his Spirit has no other way to evince that he is a son of God. If it is said that we may mistake something else for the impression of the Spirit we reply, so may the seeker of salvation mistake some movement of his own feelings for the Spirit of adoption. It would be very foolish for us to refrain from preaching that doctrine which lies at the very foundation of the spirituality of Methodism, lest we give occasion for some mistaken confession of saving faith in Christ.

The longer, I live the more am I convinced that the children of God should seek this guidance more than they do in the perplexities of life. It is quite another thing to make positive assertion that any particular act is infallibly prompted by the Holy Spirit. Here is where fanaticism crops out. Yet it is the privilege of every Christian to commit his ways to the Lord and enjoy the comforting belief that God is leading him by the hand.

However, there is another sufficient witness to Christian purity, the testimony of consciousness.

Is there any advantage in knowing that depravity, the work of the devil in us, is destroyed? Would it not afford a strong safeguard against future defilement in the moment of temptation? We aver that a consciousness of inward purity is strongly protective of purity. Let me give a few homely illustrations. During the administration of Andrew Johnson, whose reconstruction policy was to withhold the ballot from the millions of freedmen, I heard Frederick Douglass, arguing that the elective franchise would elevate the black man, say: "If you wish to keep a man out of the mud, black his boots." If a mother wishes a daughter not to play hide-and-peek among coal carts and tar buckets, she dresses her in garments as white as snow. If the housewife wishes to keep her maid from using a certain china vessel from being used as a slop bowl, she calls her attention to its beauty, costliness, and cleanliness. It is certain that God, the blood

of whose Son has made us pure, will apply every motive to keep us pure. The knowledge of inner whiteness is such a motive. Strong indeed is the presumption that this safeguard will not be withheld. It is not -- my soul attests. Glory to the ever blessed Spirit! On the other hand, our missionaries in the slums testify that the strongest grip of the devil against which they are striving in rescue work is the sense of inner vileness in the wretched victims of vice.

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