

Entire Sanctification as Taught by Peter

by Dougan Clark

The sermon emphasizes the importance of entire sanctification, or holiness, in all aspects of life, and provides guidance on how to grow in grace and become a holy people.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:15, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 Peter 2:24, 2 Peter 3:11

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Holiness"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches on the endorsement of Paul's writings by Peter, emphasizing their unity in teaching about holiness and sanctification. Peter and Paul, both martyred in Rome, are portrayed as united in their belief in the inspiration of Scripture. Peter's exhortation to holiness is rooted in the expectation of inheriting a holy heaven, reflecting the likeness of God as His children. The sermon highlights the necessity of entire sanctification for growth in grace, emphasizing the importance of spiritual health and nourishment from the Word of God. Peter's teachings on holiness, priesthood of believers, suffering for righteousness, and the coming judgment underscore the call to live blamelessly and in holiness.

Transcript

In the first place, Peter sanctioned all the writings of his beloved brother, Paul, and this probably at a period when Paul was either dead or separated from his ministerial work by imprisonment. There is a tradition that both the apostles were put to death on the same day at Rome, the one by crucifixion, choosing himself to have his head downward because unworthy to die just like his Master--the other by beheading, because he was a Roman citizen, which was deemed, at Rome, too honorable a position to be subjected to the ignominious death of the cross. Even if this should be true, yet Peter's second epistle, in which he endorses Paul's teachings, and gives to his writings the same authority as to the rest of the Bible, seems to have been written but a short time previous to his own martyrdom. The mature judgment of Peter, therefore, was that Paul was an inspired writer of Scripture, and that what he had given to the churches through his epistles, and left as a permanent legacy for the church universal, is to be received as gospel truth. And this will apply to his copious and frequent allusions to entire sanctification, as well as to the various other subjects treated of by his inspired pen. On the subject of holiness, therefore, Peter and Paul are as one; and we need not be surprised that in the very first sentence of his first epistle, he addresses the Christians of the Jewish dispersion in Asia Minor--though by no means excluding the Gentile converts--as elect according to the fore-knowledge (not predestination) of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, which must include entire as well as partial sanctification, unto (not

unconditional happiness or misery,) but unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, in one grand outburst of salutation from his glowing heart, he associates sanctification of the Spirit, the blood of sprinkling, and the obedience of faith. Neither Peter nor Paul stops in the midst of his earnest appeals to men's hearts, in order to give a lecture on Systematic Theology, but both scatter seed-thoughts all over their inspired pages, which are abundant in fruitage to the candid and reflecting mind. And right here we remark that Paul to the Thessalonians employs the same expression, sanctification of the spirit, in connection with belief of the truth, and thus putting the apostle of the circumcision by the side of the apostle of the uncircumcision we have sanctification by the blood of Jesus, sanctification by faith, sanctification by the Holy Ghost, and even in a subordinate sense, sanctification by obedience, and all this without the slightest inconsistency or contradiction.

And as Peter starts out by calling God's people to holiness, he continues by reminding them that their hope is to be fixed upon "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." What more natural than that those who are expecting to inherit a holy heaven, should themselves seek while here to become a holy people? Surely we should desire a meetness for our inheritance as well as a title to it.

After speaking of the "trial of their faith being much more precious than of gold which perisheth," the apostle utters forth an imperious call to entire sanctification. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Thus he quotes from the words of the great lawgiver in Leviticus--that Moses, whom all Jews have delighted to honor, and shows at a glance that the Old Testament, as well as the New, bears witness to the holiness of God, and makes that fact a sufficient reason for the command and requirement that His people should be holy, also.

Our Heavenly Father, then, is a holy God and dwells in a holy heaven. Is it not most reasonable and most fit that He should require all who are to dwell with Him forever in that holy place, to be holy also? And in order to find an abundant entrance into that everlasting kingdom, we must be made holy while still clothed in flesh and sojourning upon earth. Nothing that is not already pure and holy can pass through the gates of pearl into the eternal city, the New Jerusalem.

Holiness is what constitutes the family likeness between our Father in heaven and His children both on earth and in heaven. A lady was accosted in the streets of a western city by a stranger, who asked her if she was not the daughter of such a one, naming him. She replied, with some surprise at the question, in the affirmative. "I knew you," said the gentleman, "by your resemblance to your father who was my particular friend twenty-five years ago, away back in the State of Maine." And the lady was delighted that the lineaments of her father's countenance were so impressed upon her own that she should thus be recognized even by one who had never seen her before as her father's child.

Ah! beloved, have we the likeness of our Heavenly Father so imprinted upon our faces and upon our walk and upon our conversation that all who know Him shall recognize His features in us? Oh, for more of the family likeness which shall stamp us as sons of God wherever we are and whatever we do. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

In comparison with the precious "blood of Christ" Peter characterizes silver and gold, which men call precious metals, as "corruptible things," and then gives the striking exhortation, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," and all this on the basis of the new birth which they had already

received "of the incorruptible seed by the word of God."

Why, Peter, although a fisherman and an unlearned and ignorant man, yet when thou writest under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it is almost as hard to keep up with thee as with thy beloved brother, Paul!

See how holiness is, as it were, piled up and repeated in various ways in the sentence quoted above. (1), "Ye have purified your souls." Yes, and it was Peter who spoke before the council at Jerusalem in reference to Cornelius and his household, and said that God "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." The word "purify" is derived from a Greek root which means "fire." Souls are purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and the result is a continual "obeying the truth," and (2), the positive side of this purification is "unfeigned love of the brethren," and this is love with a pure heart and fervent, the same love which John calls perfect love, and the standard of which is in the words of the Lord Jesus, "As I have loved you that ye also love one another."

Was ever more holiness crowded into a single verse? Peter had never been to a Theological Seminary, but he had listened through three eventful years to the blessed teachings of the Lord Jesus, and he had been filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and without aiming at system or explanation, he has compressed more sound theology into a single verse than we find in many a voluminous treatise and many a lengthy commentary and many an eloquent sermon.

And then in the rapturous eloquence of inspiration he tells us how to grow in grace. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," and his last exhortation at the end of the second epistle is, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Peter, by no means, teaches us that we grow into grace, or that we grow into entire sanctification. We first become receivers, and get grace before we can grow in it, and we must first receive entire sanctification before we can grow in it. Like all other gospel blessings, this is the gift of God, and is forever, therefore, unobtainable by any process of growth. But Peter says in effect, in order to grow in grace you must do two things. (1), Lay aside everything that hinders growth, specifying malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil speakings. Now it is plain as the sun at noon-day that all these things are the fruits of the carnal mind. And so in a single thought the exhortation is to lay aside, or put off, or give up to destruction, the depravity of our nature, the inbred sin which doth so easily beset, and which so long as it exists, will be an insuperable hindrance to all rapid and symmetrical growth, and (2) desire, and of course, partake of the sincere milk of the word. Ah, here is wisdom, the secret of successful growth, in the spiritual as in the natural world, is first to become healthy, and then to take plenty of nourishment. Holiness is spiritual health, and implies the absence of inbred sin which is always spiritual disease. The child that is healthy and gets plenty of pure milk will grow and develop rapidly. The time will soon come when he can eat and digest meat and still strengthen and expand his physical organism on this richer diet, and thus he will finally become a large and strong man. But the child may be healthy and still not grow because it is starving for want of food. Or, it may have plenty of the most wholesome food and still not grow because disease prevents it from assimilating the nourishment. Sound health and plenty of food, with proper exercise, are the essentials of the right kind of growth. Now the Holy Bible contains not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. It has been remarked by another that if Christians would be giants they must eat giants' food. And the essential requisite for appropriating either the milk or the meat is to have a sound spiritual constitution and that means simply entire sanctification. Peter is right again. We grow by the sincere milk of the word after we have gotten rid of that which always and everywhere obstructs true growth.

Of course my reader will not understand me to say, any more than Peter himself says, that we experience growth in grace simply by a head knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. I do not forget that it is not the written word but the Eternal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is the bread of life. Nor do I forget that we feed upon His broken body and His shed blood, not by intellect, not by reason, not by culture, not by learning, but by faith.

But after all it is the Bible, or rather it is Bible truth, whether presented on the pages of inspiration or in the preached word, which is the great instrumentality employed by the Holy Spirit, in bringing men to Christ, and in feeding and nourishing and strengthening and edifying the church which has thus been gathered to Him. And so both Peter in speaking about the "sincere milk of the word," and Paul in referring to the "strong meat," by which term he characterizes the deeper spiritual truths of revelation, are leading us to Jesus, the true bread, the living bread, the bread of life.

Our apostle passes next to a most glowing description of the Christian priesthood, and again the leading idea of holiness flashes from his pen, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Again, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." Here is our title of nobility, beloved, and who of us would exchange it for an earldom, or a dukedom or a kingdom? Not I at least.

The Jews of old received spiritual blessing very largely, and even temporal blessing also, through the mediation of an outward priesthood. And the family of priests were chosen and ordained of God Himself. "No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

But under the Christian dispensation all God's saved people are priests as well as kings, and the sacrifices which they offer are spiritual sacrifices, the body as a living sacrifice to be consumed like a whole burnt offering in His service, "the fruit of the lips giving thanks to His name," and the doing good and communicating, that is to say, a life rich in faith and good works, such are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased. But to be a Christian priest in the sense here described must involve and does involve the idea of entire sanctification. Peter's words will not allow us to doubt that the priesthood of believers is a "holy priesthood."

Afterwards, the chief of the apostles exhorts his readers to take ill treatment patiently when they have to suffer, not for doing wrong but for doing well, and reminds us of the example of Christ, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously; who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness," winding up with a terse expression of the great doctrine of the atonement "by whose stripes ye were healed."

Paul would have us "dead to sin" by reckoning. Peter would have us "dead to sins" by making no response to the suggestions of Satan or the temptations which he may present to us. To be dead either to sin within us or to sins without us, implies holiness of heart, that is, entire sanctification. Praise the Lord for the perfect agreement of His two great apostles in regard to this glorious doctrine.

Still further, Peter speaks of the "holy women" of old, and exhorts Christian women to be like them, particularly in adorning themselves not with gay attire, but with inward and spiritual graces. And in his second epistle, he alludes to "holy men of God," speaking through the Old Testament as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And here we have the best possible definition of inspiration, in regard to which volumes have been written, and very different views expressed by equally learned and candid men. But what can

be more satisfactory to the humble, Christian mind than just to feel that when he reads his Bible, he is perusing the words of "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Such a mind will find no difficulty about inspiration.

In the last chapter of his second epistle, Peter rebukes the unbelief of the scoffers, who then believed, and whose successors still believe that the present order of the material universe will continue for an indefinite period, if not, indeed, forever. He assures us that the Lord has not forgotten, that He is not slack concerning His promises, but that the very reason why the sinful world has been spared so long is because of God's long suffering and mercy, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And, then, having declared that the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire, that the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, that the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, he exclaims with most appropriate words, "Seeing then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness," and this in order "that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Praise the Lord for the doctrine of entire sanctification as taught by the apostle of the circumcision. Amen.

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