

# Section I. the Practical Limitations of the Idea

by Jesse T. Peck

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*The sermon discusses the concept of Christian perfection, emphasizing that it is not about achieving a state of perfection in development, but rather about being perfect in character and love.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15

**Topics:** "Christian Perfection", "Entire Sanctification"

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## Description

Jesse T. Peck preaches about the necessity of holiness for seeing the Lord, emphasizing the work of grace upon the heart and the corresponding transformation in the life after conversion. He defines Christian perfection as being limited by fallen human nature, not divine or angelic, nor legal perfection, but a state of complete consecration and faith in God. Peck highlights the importance of entire sanctification, which includes perfect love, entire consecration, perfect faith, cleansing from all inward impurities, and practical outward Christianity, as essential for entering heaven.

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## Transcript

Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. How important, then, that we should understand it! Subsequent to the radical change which takes place in conversion, there is certainly a work of grace upon the heart, and a corresponding result in the life, included in the plan of salvation, the conditions of which are imperatively binding upon Christians. In some high and important sense we are to be "sanctified wholly," made "holy," "cleansed from all sin," be rendered "perfect," filled with "perfect love." It is precisely this work which we propose to define; and to prevent misconstruction, let us state certain negative limitations, which will very much diminish the sphere of controversy.

1. It must be limited by the capacities and susceptibilities of fallen human nature. These are created, and hence, of necessity, finite. He who should obey the command, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" would not therefore be a perfect God, but a perfect Christian, and between the highest degree of human perfection and the perfection of God, there would be the difference between the finite and the infinite. The Christian perfection which we advocate is not divine, and, hence, has none of the characteristics of divinity, as infallible judgment and unchangeable holiness. The liability to fall into sin, and deserve eternal death, certainly cannot be less than that of Adam in Paradise, perfect as he was when he came from the hands of his Maker.

If we were furnished with data for complete comparison of man in his best estate, with angels in heaven, we should undoubtedly find many important particulars in which the human would be inferior to the

angelic. Our views of angelic character, so far as they are drawn from Scripture, assign them a higher rank, in power and excellence, than could be true of man. However this may be, we do not speak of the excellence of man in reference to any angelic standard. We can conceive of human frailties and defects, which may co-exist with the very best intentions, but would be inadmissible in the perfect state of angelic being. It is human capability and no other to which these exalted Scriptures refer.

But the capabilities of fallen human nature must be less than those of our original parents. Even the complete destruction of sin would not destroy all its effects. As the man of dissolute habits, however perfectly reformed, must bear to his grave the injuries of health and constitution, which have been the result of his indiscretions and crimes, so, human beings, however entirely delivered from indwelling sin, will still retain the inaccuracies of moral discrimination, the feebleness of judgment, the moral decrepitude, which have resulted from their depravity of character and conduct. As a consequence, on the whole, inevitable, there will be errors in judgment, mistakes in practice, in the best condition of humanity. We do not, therefore, teach Adamic perfection for fallen human nature. By just so much as the intellectual, moral, and physical standard of human capacity has been lowered by sin, must the "highest attainable excellence" now, be less than before the fall.

Nor can we regard the perfection taught in the Bible as legal perfection, or, such as in itself could stand the rigor of divine justice. The law of God is the true and only standard of right, as it existed in his own mind, prior to its announcement. Like its Author, it is faultless and immutable. It was made for man as man, with all the powers originally given him, and the destruction of those powers by sin could have no tendency to modify its claims. What it was right for man to do, and just for God to require, previous to the fall, must have been right and just after it, must be right and just, now and for ever. The debtor, who, by abuse of his own privileges, disposes of the means to pay, thereby rendering it impossible to pay, does by no means thus discharge the debt, nor does the law exonerate him on such account, or adjust the claims or rights of the creditor to the reduced and destitute condition of the debtor. God could by no means authorize or tolerate, at one time, that which he had condemned at another. He never could exact less -- he never has exacted, and never will exact less, than the perfect conformity of all the unimpaired, physical, intellectual, and moral abilities of created man, to what he knew, what he now knows, and always will know to be the duty of such created intelligences towards their Creator. Unless, therefore, the breaking of a law has some tendency to destroy it, the stern law of sinless perfection is in full force at this day, in regard to man as man.

But this is far from being the assumed or actual condition of man, in his holiest earthly state. With his whole heart cleansed from sin, such are its susceptibilities of moral defilement as that, left to itself for a moment, it would again receive the stains of sin. With its fullest affections absorbed in God, if not mercifully sustained, these affections would instantly wander. With all the energies, physical, intellectual and moral, consecrated to God, they would be enfeebled, erring, and, in some respects, constantly failing energies. But God's immutable law makes no allowances for these failures in character or in action, in thought, feeling, or purpose, in word or deed, past, present, or to come. In whatever sense, therefore, redeemed man may ever be regarded as perfect, it cannot be in a legal sense.

And there are other reasons for the same view. Among men,-- Christian men, there is an infinite variety of capacity; a variety which never ceases, and, of course, there are relatively all grades and variations of perfection in the services rendered to their Maker. If, therefore, this perfection be legal, then there is no one grand, perfect, and unchangeable rule of right, to which all men are alike responsible, but there is an indefinite number of laws; as many as there are individuals, and even these with no single attribute of

permanence, but ever varying to suit the constantly changing ability of the moral agent! And the only effect of voluntarily or otherwise weakening our ability, is to produce an instant modification of the law to suit our impaired condition! All hence that a sinner would have to do to destroy the force of a law, binding upon him at one time, in view of a given and actual condition of his moral powers, would be to do violence to those powers; for, upon the ground denied in this argument, the law would immediately lower its claims to his reduced ability, and with all his glaring defects, simply doing as well as he then could do, he would be legally perfect. His moral character and condition, which, before the reduction of his ability, would have been, by his previous law, sternly condemned, has, by such reduction, become exactly what God requires, and would now stand the rigor of divine justice! Upon this theory, law would be no general principle, but a concatenation of disconnected facts, or, in other words, law would not be law! We can have no such unworthy views of God or his government. Whatever changes are going on among men, he is unchangeable, and however infinite the variety in human character, his rule of right must be invariable.

And yet these defects are actual, and, in one form or another, universal. The capacity of man for virtue and piety never can be what it might have been, if no moral paralysis had seized it. Every Christian feels more or less of this feebleness, and marks with deep regret and humble penitence, the failures which result from it. Not one, who is endowed with true humility, could think of comparison with the stern law of God, without shrinking in terror. Not one who, informed that for everything which exists within him, and which has appeared in his outward life to the severe eye of God, he must prepare himself to go unprotected and unatoned, to the judgment, would not be overwhelmed in despair; and, beyond all question, multitudes have found acceptance with God, whose disabilities are, and must forever remain, much greater than those which arise necessarily out of hereditary depravity; so enfeebling to the moral powers, are the effects of actual transgression, and especially of early dissolute habits. The law is, therefore, surely not the standard of Christian perfection.

If now, it be asked, how these positions can be harmonized -- the law uncompromising in its claims, and yet the purest and best of Christians, in actual character and attainments, defective in comparison with it, we answer, "The law is our school-master to bring us to Christ." God's plan of saving men is not by the law -- not upon conditions of faultless conformity to its claims, but of entire dependence upon our Advocate and Redeemer. It is "by grace through faith." This is the glory of the system. Christ is our dependence, not only for the merit that pardons, and the blood which cleanses from all sin, but also for magnifying the law and making it honorable,-- meeting the claim of the law for us, in all the particulars of unavoidable defects. For this very reason the best of men may say, with propriety,

"Every moment, Lord, I need

The merit of thy death."

2. This idea must be limited by the law of progression. This law, in its unvarying application to all Christians, is, "but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Increase in capacity, is the law of our being, the law most obstinately antagonized by sin, and which must act with freedom and power, just in proportion to the extent and completeness of our deliverance from sin. When, therefore, we are called upon to "go on unto perfection," it cannot be perfection in development. The work of sanctification in progress after our conversion, can, therefore, in no sense, be the growth of the soul, though it is doubtless, in a high sense, the condition of its growth. Unless it be true that we are required to grow from our infant state in the sense of expansion, increase or enlargement of the powers redeemed, up to a perfection which admits of no further growth, the only perfection offered us in the Bible is perfection in

character -- in the state of our moral natures, in the condition of our regenerate powers, and not in growth or development. The work of renovating the inner man is to be completed. The conditions of the largest, fullest, freest growth in grace, are to be perfected. By Christian perfection, or entire sanctification then, we by no means intend any form of completeness beyond which we cannot advance.

The definition of entire sanctification is thus confined to a very small compass, and made comparatively easy. It is limited by the capacities and susceptibilities of fallen human nature. It does not, therefore, raise man to the perfection of the Godhead, nor of angels, nor of Adam. It is not legal perfection. It is not perfection in development. But what is it?

## SECTION II. THE CONTENTS OF THE IDEA

We now proceed to answer the question with which the last section closed, or, in other words, to ascertain the contents of this central idea.

Its general expression is "perfect love;" love to God without mixture of slavish fear; love to man without selfishness; love which springs up in the soul at the time of conversion, increasing, extending, conquering, and wholly superseding all love of the world, in its wealth, its honors, its pleasures; all forms of self-love which seek to make the demands of self superior to the claims of God or the rights of man -- love filling the soul, controlling the intellect, sensibilities and will, becoming the source of thought, feeling and action; realizing the exact spirit of those great commandments "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." However enfeebled the powers of the entirely sanctified, however less than those of primitive man, and though, from the fact of being impaired by sin, of necessity for ever less than the law requires, yet he is accepted for Christ's sake, always needing, and always having the full merit of his death. It is the perfect realization of God's plan of salvation,-- poor, feeble, helpless man, merging himself entirely in Christ; "complete in him," and in no single respect -- in no single moment, without him.

But to be more particular, we understand this great whole of perfect love to be inclusive of the following facts and results:

1. Entire consecration. The terms which we are endeavoring to explain, imply this. A leading idea of sanctification and also of holiness, is separation, setting apart from a common to a sacred use. Hence, the utensils of the temple service, never, under any circumstances, to be devoted to common or ordinary use, were sanctified -- holy -- consecrated.

By the action of sin, man's created powers have been alienated from their original sacred use, have been given up to common, to profane use. To this the responsible agent has consented. Voluntary devotion to self, to the world, to sin, has become the great crime of man -- the crime of ingratitude, of rebellion, of robbery indeed, for it takes from God what is justly his due. Now, how can the approbation of God be fully enjoyed until this alienation of his rights be remedied? In conversion, the consecration to God is sincere, but not discriminating. The further study of the heart, the aid of genuine experience, and the searching power of God's Holy Spirit, will, in nearly, if not quite all cases, reveal defects in the consecration -- will bring to our notice strongly marked mental reservations, in favor of our own way. We see that, in many things, we choose our own way, in distinction from God's way, and detect ourselves in practically carrying out our own wills, in preference to God's will. We see it, feel it, repent of it, mourn and grieve over it, seek and obtain forgiveness for it, and yet find it returning, with more or less power, evincing what is unquestionably true, that the source of the difficulty is within us, that a more complete and final separation

of conscious self, from fallen worldly and selfish elements, is indispensable to required success in the Christian life.

Now, that state of perfect love, which we seek to define, implies this entire and finished separation, so that between the two great spiritual powers, always in probation, contending for our souls and bodies, there shall henceforth be no dallying, no vacillation, no vibrating from one to the other; but God shall have the whole -- the soul and body, the intellect, the affections, the desires, the will, property, talents, genius, learning, friends, time, eternity, -- all considerately, solemnly, voluntarily, handed over to God, so that, henceforth, the consecrated Christian has actually nothing which is not held as belonging to him, does nothing but aims at the exact realization of his will -- reckons all blessings as coming from him, and hence is completely absorbed in the divine will, and the divine glory. This is one fact included in the central idea of Christianity.

2. It includes perfect faith. In the hearts of Christians, generally, there is a strong tendency to distrust the assurances of God; -- no recognized, willing distrust -- no deliberate. contradiction or denial of God's holy word. This would bring them into condemnation. But the unsanctified heart trusts more fully what we know to be true, or even think, or suppose, or desire to be true, than what God has asserted or proposed. We do not at first lose our propensity to criticize, to modify, or at least to comprehend, and somehow, rationally demonstrate, the great scheme of redemption. We are hence, conscious of much halting, hesitating, and not unfrequently compelled to grapple with absolute doubt, when seeking to confide in Jehovah's word -- to throw ourselves upon the atonement, and appropriate the fulness of the divine promises to us. Faith, in the regenerate state only, is therefore, comparatively feeble, unsteady, and frequently the result of special exertions, arising from emergencies. But, in its higher, clearer, fuller, exercise, it "works by love and purifies the heart." In the calm, self-examination, the deep searchings of heart, the painful convictions, the fearful struggles which generally precede the full realization of perfect love, this feebleness of faith, and the unreasonableness of human attempts to sit in judgment on the revelations of the infinite God, fully appear. The divine veracity rises into a clear, ascertained, unchangeable reality. When God says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," the heart answers, It is true -- it can be done -- it surely will be done. When the baptism of the Holy Ghost descends, and the words of freshness and power are spoken to the inmost soul, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," it responds, It does -- it now cleanseth me from all sin. What before had been a promise, an assurance for realization in some distant future day, assumes the verity of a present, occurring, existing fact; so bold and commanding is triumphing faith; and the clear testimony of the witnessing spirit attests the entire completion of the work.

Faith is henceforth, full, unwavering confidence in God's word, in each and all his holy promises -- in the present, actual availing power of the Savior's blood, in the unerring wisdom and rectitude of God's plans and providences; -- faith, triumphant in darkness and light, in prosperity and adversity, in temptation and deliverance, in all states, and all conditions, inward and outward -- faith that hangs upon God -- that merges self in Deity -- that makes Christ the sole and sufficient portion for this, and the life to come. We find this our "most holy faith" also, in the central idea of Christianity.

3. It includes the cleansing of the soul from all inward impurities. In the merely justified state, we are not entirely pure. The word of God, as we have seen, assumes it, in making arrangements to cleanse from all unrighteousness, those and only those, who are truly converted. We have inward convictions of remaining corruptions, corresponding with these inspired declarations. The conscience recognizes the stain. We feel the struggle arising from unholy elements, "roots of bitterness springing up trouble us." Hence,our

weakness in Christian effort, our inefficiency as laborers in God's vineyard; our oft-repeated failures in representing the true spirit of Christianity, and those outward vacillations and sins into which we are suddenly betrayed. But, in the work of entire sanctification, these impurities are all washed away, so that we are wholly saved from sin, from its inward pollution. This is well taught in the numerous Scriptures, which present the idea of cleansing, as in the use of water for the garments or bodies, and blood for the soul. Of the latter, take a single and sufficient instance. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Those who have realized this cleansing, no longer "sow to the flesh." The enemy called "the flesh" is destroyed, and when, henceforth, they are attacked by the devil and the world, they are all on the Lord's side. This is what we mean by "a clean heart," by being "pure in heart."

4. It includes a perfection in practical, outward Christianity, not possible in the merely justified state. Perfect love gives paramount power to the will of God. He who is wholly saved from sin, in every case of duty exclaims, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." There is, hence, perfect harmony between inward feeling and choice, and outward labor for the glory of God; no reluctance in meeting Christian obligations -- a prompt and cheerful obedience to every known command of the Savior. The wholly sanctified needs no urging, not even by himself, to read the Holy Bible, for it brings to him revelations of divine love and power, with which his soul is charmed; -- needs no urging to secret prayer, for direct communion with God is his life -- his soul's delight; -- needs no urging to appropriate means to the demands of the church and the world, for his property is all the Lord's, and he is simply the Lord's steward; needs no urging to work for his Master, for with transparent sincerity he may say, "I delight to do thy will, O God." Crosses, sufferings, toils in his Master's vineyard, all deepen his sense of obligation and increase his gratitude. Happy to suffer reproach, to make sacrifices, and to bear burdens for the honor of Christ, he exclaims, with the apostle, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." On earth a pilgrim, with his home in heaven, he has but one thing to do, simply to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are his. Life's distractions and cares are all reduced to order, under the amazing simplicity and power of a single aim,-- a pure, a lofty purpose, to please his Maker.

The past has no power to annoy, for that is all atoned by the blood applied, of his suffering Savior. The future has no power to raise an anxious thought, for that is not his -- it is simply and wholly God's. The present is all secure,-- entirely lost and swallowed up in God. Oh, happy state! -- who would not give up all to gain it? Alas! what folly to be satisfied with first and limited attainments, w'hen experience so sweet, so rich and full, awaits our command! What infinite loss we suffer, by remaining babes in Christ, "children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine!" What wonder that, with our eyes once turned toward this glorious treasure, we exclaim:

"My soul breaks out in strong desire,

The perfect bliss to prove;

My longing heart is all on fire,

To be dissolved in love."

O, could we only know how near it is -- how simple the act of faith which would realize it, we would not, could not, delay; -- we should grasp the sacred prize, and "stand complete in all the will of God."

With one important consideration we are forcibly struck. There is no need of debate upon this fundamental doctrine, among evangelical Christians. Who can deny that a much higher standard of piety is proposed in the Scriptures, than that which is generally reached! And if it be limited by the capabilities of fallen human nature, and hence, not divine, or angelic, or legal or inconsistent with future growth, but exactly adapted to promote it, who will say it is impracticable? And when it is exhibited as the fullest earthly realization of the religion of love, who can fail to be charmed with it? Who, of any evangelical denomination, cannot, in honest sincerity, say, perfect love, entire consecration, faith without unbelief, purity from inward sin, and a loving, prompt and cheerful obedience to the will of God, must be right -- must be my imperative duty -- my blood-bought privilege, and henceforth I will not rest until I reach the exalted state? Thank God, we may all meet here, and know for ourselves what is that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord."

### SECTION III. DIFFICULTIES CONSIDERED.

The candid inquirer, feeling the pressure of theoretical and practical difficulties, may after all this ask, "What is that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord? What degree of it is essential? Is it that unmixed, indeficient purity, that will cause every feeling, expression, and act, neither to be wanting or wrong? I mean the deficiency or defect not attributable to the heart -- to the fountain? Is the preparation for heaven nothing less than perfect holiness -- the inward foes not only conquered but slain, exterminated?

Will not those merely regenerated, having commenced to live, though the purpose of that life be not fulfilled here, live in heaven? Infants dying have not obtained that for which their existence was a means: will they not hereafter?

The dying thief -- the regenerated dying suddenly (many do so die) -- Christians in times of rejoicing, testifying to their hopes of heaven, believing, should they die, they would be with Jesus, and yet who living, exhibited not the fruits of entire sanctification; -- have these had a preparation for heaven? Many Christians too die, of whom we have all hope, yet had they recovered we should not have expected the testimony and evidence of sanctification.

What shall we say then? that entire holiness, such as we define it to be, is essential to the happiness of heaven and to admittance there? What will be done with such cases? If we assert that "God will cut short the work in righteousness," that is leaving it to the sovereignty of God. If to that we refer one case, then, why not all? Sanctification then will be something that God does to the regenerated, which is in no wise referable to their act, but to their character just as heaven is bestowed.

What is the truth in reference to these points? My mind is, and ever has been clear in regarding holiness as the great design of God in reference to us -- the sole purpose of the gospel. That to embrace this design, labor for the accomplishment of it in us, is what our interest demands of us. That to set this before the world, and by all persuasions to induce them to seek, labor, and fight for it, is the special province of the ministry, I as heartily believe. But will the germ perish if the fruit be not matured? Is it only the ripened fruit that will be garnered? What will become of that for which the season has been too short?"

To this we reply: --We have already seen that there are two kinds of perfection -- one in character, another in development. The first, applied to the body, means health; the second, full growth. Applied to the intellect, the first means soundness, completeness; the second would mean the highest attainable strength, power, scope, accuracy. Applied to the moral nature, the first means "pure in heart," "cleansed from' all sin," that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord;" the second would mean such extent and finish of the sanctified powers, as that they can no more "grow in grace." Applied to the Christian

graces, the first implies that they are unmixed; "perfect love" without "fear;" the second would mean that these graces are incapable of further increase.

Now, perfection, in the second sense (of development ) is a physical law purely. We do not predicate it of the intellect. We cannot of the moral powers, and certainly not of the Christian graces. Upon the contrary, we have shown that the law of progress is imperatively binding upon all Christians; that imperfections in character, in the moral condition, in the state of the Christian graces, are the great hindrances to progress; and that it is only in proportion as they are removed that development becomes possible and certain. Whatever may have been the development, (and there will doubtless be found every variety) previous to death, it must then go on in increased ratio for ever, such is the law of mind, and such are the intimations of the Scriptures Whatever, therefore, may be lacking in growth for which "the season is too short," is thus amply provided for. Even "the germ," if it be a true one, a "plant which my heavenly Father hath planted," may, as we suppose, be transplanted to a heavenly soil by the same hand, and flourish in perpetual vigor.

But perfection in character must be secured in this life. The Christian, to be ready at any given time to enter heaven, must be sanctified not merely in part, but "wholly." He must be "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." He must be made actually "holy," "cleansed from all unrighteousness," must be really "pure in heart."

To take any other ground, would be to remove probation into another world, or to make the final preparation "depend upon the sovereignty of God," neither of which is the doctrine of revelation. It might indeed be said that sin (in some modified form) and holiness are to co-exist in heaven for ever, but not by any concerned in this argument. So much then, we may consider settled, beyond the reach of a doubt, that the sinner must be cleansed from sin; in other words, wholly sanctified; in still other, be made perfect in love; or yet other, be constituted (in nature ) a completed, finished, total Christian, with no corruption, sin, or depravity remaining, before he can enter heaven. This being secured, he may be in any stage of development, either as to the real, or relative strength, or scope of the moral nature sanctified, or as to the strength or scope of the perfected Christian graces.

The question as to when this complete work occurs, is, as we have seen, a question of fact. In the nature of the case, regeneration is not it. By the assumptions and requirements of the Bible, and by experience, it is settled that its commencement is simultaneous with regeneration, or the new birth; and with equal clearness, that it is not completed at that time.

The matter then stands thus: entire deliverance from sin is necessary to enter heaven. This does not take place at the time of regeneration, therefore those who are saved, must be fully sanctified, some time between the period of regeneration and that of entering heaven, or of death. Regeneration is not therefore of itself a preparation for heaven -- imperfect sanctification is not. But the problem now arises, what is the fate of the truly converted man who dies without giving any evidence of entire sanctification? We answer, the fact may exist without evidence to us of its existence. In such case, the completion of the work being known to God would be sufficient. This reduces the problem to its severest form. If the truly converted man die actually unsanctified, (with remaining sin, or corruption, or depravity in his heart,) what will be his fate? we answer, we believe no such fact can exist, and for the following reasons:

1. It supposes antagonism in God; pronouncing a sinner pardoned and condemned at the same time, which he does not do, in this life, though the sinner is known to be justified and not wholly sanctified.

2. It supposes, what cannot be true, that when the pardoned sinner has so lived and believed up to a given moment, as to secure the divine approbation, God will remove him from the trial state, and give him no further chance to secure a completion of the work.

3. The continuance of the justified state implies obedience in intention to all the requirements of the gospel; the law of progress, ("grow in grace,") and the law of purity, ("be ye holy,") included. In all such, there is more or less of panting for holiness, of praying for it -- of abhorring and turning away from the least remains of inward sin, and more or less receiving of the sanctifying power, through daily faith in the blood that cleanseth. The truly justified are therefore constantly approaching the glorious deliverance, which will present them without spot before the Throne. There hence arises a strong probability that many reach the state of entire sanctification, without the knowledge of others; and, for the want of well-defined views, or the precise style of faith that secures a witness to that special work, it may not be known, (as entire sanctification,) even to themselves. Such may have a general witness, which is inclusive of this, that their hearts are right with God,-- that they are ready to die, and believe that, if they were to die just as they are, God would receive them to heaven. And they would, doubtless, be safe, (not by being excused for inward impurity, nor being permitted to carry any part of it into heaven but,) inasmuch as they have the blessing of purity, though not theoretically understood or recognized.

4. We suppose that to voluntarily omit holiness, in desire, in prayer, in the strivings of the heart, would be disobedience, and hence real apostasy. This explains the backslidings of so many in the church. They do not "hunger and thirst after righteousness," "grow in grace," "deny themselves of all ungodliness and worldly lusts;" do not bear the fruits of justification. All this may or may not be known to others. The law of such cases is however clearly revealed by the Savior. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." "Every branch," however, "which beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Individuals who thus neglect the required growth, and the cleansing blood, whatever might be their expectations, if they should die in such condition, would assuredly be lost, not in a justified, but in a backslidden state.

For these reasons, we do not think any die in a justified state, but with the remains of carnal nature; or, in any sense, unsanctified.

This, as the reader will see, answers the question by destroying it.

But to take another view of the subject. There is no doubt with regard to those who are really perfect in love; both those who give evidence to us of the fact, and those who do not. They are delivered from all sin, and hence fitted, though certainly not more than fitted, for heaven.

There is no doubt with regard to those who, by disobeying the law of progress, or for any other reason, have lost their justification, whether the fact is known to us, or not. They, dying in that state, are certainly lost.

The only question, then, relates to those who, by supposition prior to death, belong to neither of these two classes. Now with respect to the fact, we are without data for direct conclusion, but we may argue indirectly as follows:

Either God sends them to hell, being justified, or he takes them to heaven, being unsanctified, (morally impure,) or he arbitrarily cleanses them, before he takes them away; or, we must assume, that he sees in them the real fulfillment of the necessary conditions of sanctification, and therefore cleanses them, upon

the true terms of the gospel, at some moment in life -- the occurrence of those conditions being unknown to us, or seeming improbable, having no tendency whatever to prove their non-existence.

Now the first, second, and third suppositions, no man can substantiate, either from Scripture or reason, and not only must the last follow in consequence, but it contains within itself the highest probability.

The conclusion from the whole discussion, then, must be this. God will permit nothing unholy to enter heaven. He has no two sets of conditions for believers. All the saved are entirely cleansed from sin in this life, through faith in Christ; the only obscurity in the system being, that the time and manner of bringing the conditions into exercise, may be, in many instances, concealed from short-sighted, ignorant man.

Let, then, the candid inquirer be answered specifically thus:

"What is that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord?" -- Being cleansed from all sin, perfect in love. "What degree of it is the essential?" -- No degree but the first. The work finished as to its character, whenever or however accomplished. "Is it that unmixed, indeficient purity that will cause every feeling -- expression -- and act neither to be wanting or wrong?" -- Unmixed in character, though from the effects of sin upon the intellectual, the moral, and physical powers, its manifestations will not be absolutely perfect.

Judged by the stern, unalterable law of God, without the atonement, there can be no state here, as we have shown, in which "unmixed, indeficient purity will cause every feeling, expression, and act to be neither wanting nor wrong," -- but with that complete dependence upon the merits of Christ which characterizes the soul wholly sanctified, "every feeling, expression, and act," is acceptable to God. "Is the preparation for heaven nothing less than perfect holiness -- the inward foes not only conquered, but slain and exterminated ~" We understand it so, -- perfect in character, not in development.

No foes of God or man, however conquered, can enter heaven. "Will not those merely regenerated, having commenced the life of faith, though the purposes of that life be not fulfilled here, live in heaven?" -- If they do not backslide, or, (which we conceive to be the same thing,) if they, some time during probation, "go on to perfection," not of development, but of character. "The dying thief, the regenerated dying suddenly.-- Christians, in times of rejoicing, testifying to their hopes of heaven -- believing, should they die, they would be with Jesus, and yet who living exhibit not the fruits of entire sanctification, have these a preparation for heaven?"

If, at any time, their souls were pure, they were prepared. The fact assumed, that living, they exhibit not the fruits of entire sanctification, originates doubts as to their having so recently been in that state. They were either mistaken, or have relapsed, to some extent. "Many Christians, too, die, of whom we have all hope, yet, had they recovered, we should not have expected the testimony and evidence of sanctification." -- It should be expected that souls who have really gone to heaven, would be pure if they were here in the same state in which they entered heaven.

But the frailty of poor human nature is such, that many, who have gone safely, might have immediately relapsed, and had sore battles with themselves, afterwards, had they recovered. "What shall we say, then, that entire holiness, such as we define it to be, is essential to the happiness of heaven, and to admittance there?" We dare not answer otherwise, (meaning perfect purity in moral character, perfect love which casteth out fear.) "What will be done with such cases?" If we assert that ' God will cut short the work in righteousness ' -- that is leaving it to the sovereignty of God.

If to that we refer one case, then why not all? Sanctification, then, will be something that God does to the regenerated, which is in no wise referable to their act, but to their character, just as heaven is bestowed." Even character need not be taken into the account, if it be an act of mere sovereignty. But completing the work of sanctification in view of something which God discovers in the condition of a soul, which has so believed and progressed, as to preserve a justified state to the close of probation, would be both supposable and probable, as, to have retained this state, to the end of probation, must have included the essential conditions of sanctification.

The "act" of a free mind is thus not considered as distinct from character, but a part of it. "Will the germ perish if the fruit be not matured? Is it only the ripened fruit that will be garnered?" If the germ perish, it must be in this life, and this is apostasy. It is then the branch in Christ that beareth not fruit, and "he taketh it away." If it perish not, it is the branch that beareth fruit, and then "he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." None but fruit ripened as to its character is garnered -- the figure suggests this.

But the word ripe may be, and frequently is used with reference to development, and then all stages of ripeness will be found in the garner of the Lord. "What will become of that for which the season has been too short?" No season will have been too short for possible completeness of the work of grace, (in character.) Though, in the cases of thousands, it is too short for probable completeness. God, for gracious reasons, lengthens it out for most of us, and, for reasons known to himself, he sometimes makes it fearfully short.

Three practical remarks, of great importance, are obviously suggested by this view..

1. It affords strong encouragement to justified Christians. It shows them that their continued justification includes the assurance of entire sanctification. That it is a part of the great plan of the Almighty, to perfect the work already begun, and that in their present state are included decided tendencies to this final result, and hence, strong probabilities of it. They are thus taught the value of their conversion, and furnished with the strongest inducements to press forward, to the glorious consummation of the work commenced.

2. It is a most salutary caution. If Christians become satisfied with a justified state, they will make no efforts to be saved from inbred sin. Then it will increase,-- lead to actual sin -- to apostasy. If they make the assurance that justification includes, the reason for not advancing to its realization, they defeat the assurance,-- they forfeit it -- they commit the sin of ingratitude -- of presumption. Look at the import of the act. "I shall have it, therefore I am not anxious! I shall have it, therefore I do not desire it! I shall have it, therefore I do not intend to pray for it -- to labor for it -- to believe for it!" Alas! this is the rock on which thousands have split. Upon the contrary, the argument ought to be,-- "God has done a great work for me. It is a pledge that he will do more. He has commenced the purification of my heart. It is an evidence that he intends to complete it. The glorious fulness is in view. If faithful to the grace already given,-- if my faith is a little stronger, I shall soon grasp the prize." In this way, the design of justification, and the commencement of sanctification, will be realized. In the opposite, it will be defeated as it has been in thousands of instances.

3. The duty of ministers is plain; to set the whole work of grace upon the heart, constantly and plainly before the people; -- to give due prominence to the work of conversion, including as it does, justification, regeneration, adoption, the beginnings of sanctification, and the assurance of its completion; -- to exhibit, with great fidelity and power, the imperative obligations of the law of progress, and the law of purity, showing the inevitable apostasy which results from neglect of these laws -- and to hold out, with the

clearness of light, to the Israel of God, everywhere, the glorious privilege of perfect love; and urge it, not as all the gospel, but the grand result sought in the gospel; -- not merely as a privilege and a probability, but as a duty,-- as an attainment which we are in danger of missing, and which is indispensable to our ultimate preservation in the favor of God, and our introduction to heaven. And especially should it be insisted, that our usefulness, our power as practical Christians, depends, to a great extent, upon an early reception of this gracious baptism.

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