

Entire Sanctification

By Dr. Adam Clarke

What does it mean to “sanctify”?

The word “sanctify” has two meanings:

1. To consecrate, to separate from earth and common use, and to devote or dedicate to God and his service.
2. To make holy or pure.

Many people have a lot to say about what Christ has done *for* us, and rightly so. But how little is said about what He wants to do *in* us! And yet all that He has done *for* us is in reference to what He wants to do *in* us. He became incarnate, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and appears in the presence of God, all for us. All these were saving, atoning, and mediating acts designed to reconcile us to God, to blot out our sin.

Why did He do these things? He did them so that He might purge our consciences from dead works; bind the strong man, take away the armour in which he trusted, wash the polluted heart, and destroy every foul desire and all unholy tempers. His purpose was to make the heart His throne, and fill the soul with His light, power, and life.

In a word, He came to destroy the works of the devil.

All these latter things are done *in* us. Without them we cannot be saved unto eternal life. But all the things done *in* us follow on from what He did done *for* us. If He had not become incarnate, suffered, and died in our stead, we could not receive pardon or holiness. If He did not cleanse and purify our hearts, we could not enter into the place where all is purity. It is only those who are purified from all unrighteousness who will see God. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Nothing is purified by death—nothing in the grave, and nothing in heaven. The living stones of His temple, like those of the temple in Jerusalem, are hewn, squared, and cut here on earth, in the church militant, to prepare them for inclusion there in the church triumphant.

This perfection is the restoration of man to the state of holiness from which he fell. It comes about by creating him anew in Christ Jesus, and restoring to him the image and likeness of God which he has lost. It cannot have a higher meaning than this—and must not have a lower meaning than this.

God made man in the degree of perfection that was pleasing to His own infinite wisdom and goodness. Sin defaced this divine image. Jesus came to restore it. Sin must have no triumph, and the Redeemer of mankind must have His glory. If man cannot be perfectly

saved from all sin, sin triumphs and Satan exults, because they have done a mischief that Christ either cannot or will not remove. To say He *cannot* would be shocking blasphemy against the infinite power and dignity of the great Creator. To say He *will not* would be equal blasphemy against the infinite benevolence and holiness of His nature. All sin, whether in power, guilt, or defilement is the work of the devil. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil.

What do you mean by “perfection”?

Many object to the term “perfection” in Christianity. They think it smacks of pride and presumption. But we must be careful not to stagger at any word that God uses. And we must be even more careful not to deny or fritter away the meaning of what He says. So let us examine what it means.

The word “perfection” when applied to a person or thing signifies that the person or thing is complete or finished. It has nothing in excess, and it lacks nothing. Someone once said, “We consider something perfect if it lacks nothing that is required for the purpose for which it was made.”

To be *perfect* often means “to be blameless, clear, or irreproachable.” According to the definition above, a man may be said to be perfect if he meets the purpose for which God made him. God requires every man to love Him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself. So the person who does so is perfect: he meets the purpose for which God made him. As love is the principle of obedience, so he that loves his God with all his powers will obey Him with all his powers. And whoever loves his neighbour as himself will not only do no harm to him, but will also labour to promote his best interests.

It is strange that the doctrine which enjoins such a state of perfection as this should be dreaded, ridiculed, or despised. Opposition to it can only arise from the carnal mind that is enmity to God, that is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” If I had no other proof that man is fallen from God, his opposition to Christian holiness would be enough to convince me.

God’s whole purpose was to restore man to His image, and to raise him from the ruins of the fall—to make him perfect, to blot out all his sins, to purify his soul, and to fill him with holiness. No unholy temper, evil desire, or impure affection or passion should either lodge or exist within him. This, and only this, is true religion or Christian perfection. A lesser salvation than this would be dishonourable to the sacrifice of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost. It would be as unworthy to be called “Christianity” as it would be to be called “holiness” or “perfection.”

People who ridicule this are scoffers at the word of God. Many of them are in fact irreligious men, sitting in the seat of the scornful. Those who deny it deny the whole scope

and design of divine revelation, and the mission of Jesus Christ. And those who preach the opposite doctrine are either speculative antinomians, or pleaders for Baal.

What does Paul mean when he talks about “presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus”?

Certainly he must mean *something*! So what does he mean? It must mean the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” Call it what you want, it must imply the pardon of all transgressions, and the removal of the whole body of sin and death. This must take place before we can be like Him, and see Him as he is, in His glory.

This is what I plead for. This fitness to appear before God, this thorough preparation for eternal glory, is what I pray for and heartily recommend to all true believers. I call it *Christian perfection*. If I had a better name—one with a greater depth of meaning, more worthy of the efficacy of the blood that bought our peace and cleanses from all unrighteousness—I would gladly use it. But unfortunately there is none in our language.

Why are so many people opposed to the idea?

Why is it that there are so many, even among sincere and godly ministers and people, who are so opposed to the term “perfection”? I believe it is because they think no man can be fully saved from sin in this life. But where do you find that stated clearly in the New Testament? Where is it suggested that sin is not wholly destroyed till death takes place, and the soul and the body are separated? Nowhere.

Don't we have to wait for death to be completely free from sin?

Even the erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory says that sin is so ingrained that death cannot destroy it completely. So, they say, a penal fire, a middle state between heaven and hell, is needed to atone for all that the blood of Christ has not cancelled. This purgatory is said to purge the soul from everything that the energy of the almighty Spirit has not cleansed before death. So even papists don't believe that the soul is morally contaminated as a result of its physical connection with the body. They don't believe that severing that connection removes the contamination.

Only Protestants believe in a “deathbed purgatory.” How strenuously they argue that death is the complete deliverer from all corruption, and the final destroyer of sin, as if it were revealed on every page of the Bible!

In fact, there isn't a single passage in the whole Bible that says any such thing. If it were true, then death, far from being the last enemy, would be the last and best friend, and the greatest of all deliverers. The truth is, death is neither the cause nor the means of destruction of sin. It is *the blood of Jesus alone* that cleanses from all unrighteousness.

But isn't it true that the body of sin in believers is weakened and deposed, and that death finishes it off?

So in that case the death of Christ, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, were only sufficient to depose and enfeeble the tyrant sin, but death must come in and finish him off! And so death is at least partly our saviour. Death, which was an *effect* of sin, (“for sin entered into the world, and death by sin,”), becomes the means of finally destroying it. Both the theology and the philosophy of this line of reasoning are equally absurd. It is the blood of Christ alone that cleanses from all unrighteousness. The sanctification of a believer is no more dependent on death than his justification.

But surely, believers do not cease from sin till they die?

I can only say that if that is the case, such believers don't make proper use of their faith. Why, the same can be said of the whole herd of transgressors and infidels—they cease to sin when they cease to breathe. If the Christian faith bring no other privileges than this to its followers, we do well to ask, “Wherein does the wise man differ from the fool, for they have both one end?” But the whole gospel teaches something different from this.

Doesn't a sense of indwelling sin serve to keep us humble?

A little examination will show that this is contrary to the fact. Everyone agrees that pride is of the essence of sin. It is the root from which all moral depravity grows. So how can pride humble us? Isn't the idea absurd? Show me a sincere Christian, of whatever creed, who doesn't deplore his proud, rebellious, heart and will, as the cause of all his wretchedness. It is the thing that mars his best sacrifices, and prevents his communion with God. If there were no pride, there would be no sin. And the heart from which pride is cast out has the humility, meekness, and gentleness of Christ implanted in its place.

But a man is humbled under a sense of indwelling sin.

I agree that they who see, and feel, and deplore their indwelling sin are humbled. But is it the sin that humbles? No, it is the grace of God, revealing and condemning the sin, that humbles us. Pride often lurks under a dense mask, and often appears as humility. And to conceal his working, even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light!

We mistake the cause of this boasted humiliation. We are never humbled under a sense of indwelling sin until the Spirit of God drags it to the light and shows us not only its horrid deformity, but also its hostility to God. And He only reveals it so that He may take it away. But a false opinion makes men hug the monster, and contemplate their chains with satisfaction!

But surely, the greater sense we have of our own sinfulness, the more Christ is exalted?

People say, "If it were possible for a man to be cleansed from all sin in this life, he would feel no need of a Saviour. Christ would be undervalued by him, since he no longer needs His saving power."

This is a complete mistake. How is Christ exalted before our eyes? How does He become precious to us? Is it not from a sense of what He has done for us and in us? Did anyone ever love God before he felt that God loved him? Don't we "love Him because he first loved us?"

Is it just the name *Jesus* that is precious to us? or Jesus the Saviour saving us from our sins? Do we trust in Him because of one saving act, or because of His continual work as the Saviour? Can the effect continue without the cause? Mustn't the cause continue to operate in order to maintain the effect? A child can answer these questions.

What is it that cleanses the soul and destroys sin? Isn't it the mighty power of the grace of God? What is it that *keeps* the soul clean? Isn't it the *same* power dwelling in us? A sanctified soul cannot remain holy without the indwelling Sanctifier. When Christ casts out the strong-armed man, He takes away the armour in which he trusted, He spoils his goods, He cleanses and enters into the house, so that the heart becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit. Can a person then undervalue the Christ who not only blotted out his iniquity, but also cleansed his soul from all sin, and whose presence and inward mighty working constitute all his holiness and all his happiness? Impossible! Jesus was never so highly valued, so intensely loved, so affectionately obeyed, as now. The great Saviour gets His highest glory not from His atoning and redeeming acts, but from the ongoing manifestation of His saving power.

But those who claim to be perfect are proud and supercilious, and their whole conduct says, 'I am holier than thou.'

Anyone who acts in that way has never received this grace. He is either a hypocrite or a self-deceiver. Those who *have* received it are full of meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering. They love God with all their hearts. They even love their enemies. They love the whole human family, and are servants of everyone. They know they have nothing that they didn't receive. They feel themselves to be absorbed in the splendour of God's holiness. They have no light, no power, no love, no happiness but what comes from their indwelling Saviour. Their holiness, even though it fills the soul, is still just a drop from the infinite ocean. The flame of their love, though it penetrates their whole being, is still only a spark from the incomprehensible Sun of righteousness.

I am glad to say I have met many people who professed that the blood of Christ had saved them from all sin, and whose spotless life supported that claim. I have not known one who wasn't like that. They were men of the strongest faith, the purest love, the holiest affections, the most obedient lives, and were the most useful in society. I have seen such people walking with God for many years. And just as I had the privilege of observing their

walk in life, I have also been privileged to witness their testimony at death. Their sun appeared to grow broader and brighter at its setting. Though they came through great tribulation, they found that their robes were washed and made white through the blood of the Lamb. They bore full witness to the grand effects which in this life flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification: assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance in the same to the end of their lives. O God, let my death be like theirs! Let my end be like theirs! Amen.

But those who profess this leave Christ out of the question. They either think they have purified their own hearts, or that they have gained their pretended perfection by their own merits.

Nothing can be more false. I know them well, these people who believe the doctrine of "salvation from all sin in this life". They all maintain most conscientiously that all our salvation, from the first dawn of light in the soul to its entry into the kingdom of glory, is by and through Christ. He alone convinces the soul of sin, justifies the ungodly, sanctifies the unholy, preserves us in this state of salvation, and brings us to everlasting blessedness. No soul ever was or can be saved but through His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, His death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension, and His continued intercession at the right hand of God.

What a glorious state the church would be in if people spent as much time fervently calling on God to cleanse what He has not cleansed, as they spend in decrying this doctrine! Instead of meddling with sin, and straining their minds to determine just how little grace they need to be saved, they would renounce the devil and all his works, and be determined never to rest till Christ had bruised him under their feet, and His blood had cleansed them from all unrighteousness.

Why don't people put it to the test so see how completely God will save them? Why don't they keep on praying and believing for more and more, till they find that God has withheld His hand? When they find that their agonizing faith and prayer receive no further answer, then—and not till then—they may conclude that God will no more be gracious, and will not save to the uttermost those who come to him through Christ Jesus.

But doesn't Paul himself say, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after..." (Philippians 3:12)?

But he is not talking about being restored to the image of God. He is talking about completing his ministry, and receiving the crown of martyrdom. I have fully shown this in my notes on this passage, to which I beg to refer you.

But we don't know any such Christians. On the other hand, we have heard that some who claim this experience have become scandalous.

This objection deserves an answer if asked by someone who fears God, earnestly desires salvation, and only wants to have evidence that the thing is attainable. To such a person I would say this:

There may in fact be some, even in your own acquaintance, whose evil tempers and unholy affections God has destroyed. Having filled them with His own holiness, they are enabled to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves. But they don't make public professions. Their conduct, their spirit, the whole tenor of their life, is their testimony.

On the other hand, there may not be any among your acquaintance. That may be because they don't know their privilege, or they unfortunately sit under a ministry where the doctrine is decried. In such churches holiness never abounds. People are already too apt to be slothful and unfaithful to the grace they have received; they don't need their minister to tell them to beware of expecting to receive a pure heart. Striving to "enter in at the narrow gate" is not pleasant work to flesh and blood, and they are glad of any excuse for their spiritual indolence. Such ministers always have a powerful supporter—the father of lies, who works in the unrenewed heart, filling it with darkness and unbelief. No wonder that under such a ministry no one can be "presented perfect in Christ Jesus."

But wherever the trumpet gives a certain sound, and the people go forth to battle, headed by the Captain of their salvation, there the foe is routed, and the genuine believers are brought into the liberty of the children of God.

As for some professing to have received this salvation who afterward become scandalous in their lives, I have only ever known one example. I would just observe that they might possibly have been deceived, and thought they had something they didn't have. Or they may have become unfaithful to that grace and lost it. That is always possible while here on earth. There are angels who kept not their first estate, and we all know to our cost that the head of the whole human family, who was made in the image and likeness of God, sinned against God and fell from that state. Likewise any of his descendants may fall from any degree of the grace of God while here below. Indeed, any and every man *must* fall if he ceases to watch unto prayer and to be a "worker together with God." Faith must always be kept exercised, working by love, and love is only safe when it is exerting its energies in the path of obedience.

However, this kind of objection against the doctrine of Christian perfection applies just as much to the whole revelation of God as it does to this one doctrine. After all, the Bible tells us about the defection of angels and the fall of man. The truth is, no doctrine of God rests upon the knowledge, experience, faithfulness, or unfaithfulness of man. It stands on the truthfulness of the God who gave it.

If there were not a single person who was justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus, the doctrine of justification by faith would still be true. It stands on the truth of God. And even if not one could be found in all the churches of Christ whose heart was purified from all unrighteousness, and who loved God and man with all his regenerated powers, the doctrine of Christian perfection would still be true. For Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and His blood cleanses from all unrighteousness. If every man were a liar, God is true. It is not the *profession* of a doctrine that establishes its truth; it is the God from whom it comes. Man's experience may illustrate it, but it is God's truth that confirms it. We must cease from man, believe God's testimony, and look to the one in and through whom all the promises of God are yea and amen.

What did Paul mean when he prayed that the Ephesians may be "filled with all the fulness of God"?

It is a great thing to be filled with God. It is greater still to be filled with the *fulness* of God. But to be filled with *all the fulness* of God is the greatest of all. Such a concept utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding. But there must be some sense in which the apostle understood this wonderful petition, and in which we also may understand it.

Many people, when they quote these words, seek to correct or explain what Paul means by adding the word *communicable*—that is, all the *communicable* fulness of God. But this is as futile as it is irrelevant. Common sense tells us that St. Paul would not pray that they should be filled with something that couldn't be communicated. The apostle obviously meant what he said.

So what *did* he mean by this phrase? By the "fulness of God" we understand all the gifts and graces which He has promised to bestow on man in order to obtain his full salvation here, and to make him fully prepared for the enjoyment of glory hereafter. To be *filled* with all the fulness of God is to have the heart emptied of all sin and defilement, and filled with humility, meekness, gentleness, goodness, justice, holiness, mercy, and truth, and love to God and man. In other words, a complete emptying of the soul of everything that is not of God. For whatever God fills, neither sin nor Satan can fill.

If a jar is filled with one liquid, not a drop or particle of any other kind can enter it unless it displaces the same amount of the original. In the same way, you cannot say that God *fills* the whole soul if any part, passion, or faculty is filled or occupied to any degree by sin or Satan. And since neither sin nor Satan can be where God fills everything, the prayer clearly implies that Satan shall have no dominion over that soul, nor be present in it.

Being full of humility precludes all pride. Being full of meekness precludes anger. Fulness of gentleness precludes all aggressiveness. Goodness precludes all evil. Justice precludes all injustice. Holiness precludes all sin. Mercy precludes all unkindness and revenge. Fulness of truth precludes all falsity and pretence. Where God is loved with all the heart, soul,

mind, and strength, there is no room for enmity or hatred to Him or to any thing connected with Him .

If a person is filled with God's fulness, the effect is constant, affectionate obedience to Him, and unvarying kindness towards his neighbour. Such a man is saved from all sin. The law is fulfilled in him, and he always acts under the influence of that love to God and man which is the fulfilling of the law. It is impossible to understand these words in any lower sense and yet retain any scriptural or rational consistency. How much more they imply, (and more they certainly do imply,) who can tell?

Many preachers, and multitudes of professing people, seem anxious to determine how many imperfections and infidelities, and how much inward sinfulness, is consistent with being saved. How few—how very few—set out the gospel standard to measure the members of the church, whether they are fit for the heavenly army. How few are concerned to determine whether they qualify for the ranks of the church militant! "The measure of the stature of the fulness" is seldom heard about. The measure of the stature of littleness, dwarfishness, and emptiness, is often set forth.

There is no end to the merits of Christ incarnated and crucified. There are no bounds to the mercy and love of God. There is no hindrance to the almighty energy and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. There are no limits to the improvability of the human soul. So there can be no bounds to the saving influence that God will dispense to the heart of every genuine believer. We may ask and receive, and our joy shall be full! Well may we bless and praise God, "who has called us into such a state of salvation," to a state in which we may be thus saved and, by the grace of that state, continue in the same for the rest of our lives!

Sin is the cause of the ruin of mankind. The gospel system, which sets forth its cure, is fittingly called "good news" or "glad tidings." And it *is* good news, because it proclaims Him who saves His people from their sins. It would be dishonourable to that grace, and the infinite merit of Him who procured it, to suppose (and much more to assert) that sin had made wounds that grace could not heal.

"He that commits sin is of the devil." Hear this, you who cannot bear the idea that believers are to be saved from all sin in this life! He who commits sin is a child of the devil, and proves that he has still the nature of the devil in him. "For the devil sins from the beginning." He was the father of sin. He brought sin into the world, and maintains sin in the world by living in the hearts of his own children. He leads them to transgress, and persuades others that they cannot be saved from their sins in this life. In doing so he secures a continual residence in their heart. He knows that if he has a place throughout life, he will probably have a place at death; and, if so, throughout eternity.

Doesn't John just mean that a person does not sin habitually as he formerly did?

To say this is to bring the influence and privileges of the new birth very low indeed. Why, even heathen philosophers have mastered their previous vicious habits through will-power and determination.

There is a story of a physiognomist who came to the place where Socrates was delivering a lecture. Socrates' pupils, wanting to test the man's science, asked him to examine the face of their master, and to say what his moral character was. After examining fully the philosopher's face, the physiognomist pronounced him to be the most gluttonous, drunken, brutal, and lustful old man he ever met. Since Socrates was the exact opposite of all these things, his disciples began to insult the physiognomist, But Socrates stopped them. "The principles of his science may be very correct, for such I was. But I have conquered it by my philosophy."

O you Christian theologians! You real or pretended gospel ministers! You don't allow the influence of the grace of Christ to be as great as that of the philosophy of a heathen who never heard of the true God!

But surely no man can be saved from all sin in this life?

Well, let me ask you: "So *how much* sin may we be saved from in this life?" We must come to some conclusion about this so that we have some definite aim in view, and don't waste our time praying for something we cannot have.

But just as Christ was manifested to take away our sins, to destroy the works of the devil, and as His blood cleanses from *all* sin and unrighteousness, isn't it obvious that God intends believers in Christ to be saved from *all* sin? For if His blood cleanses from *all* sin, if He destroys the works of the devil (and sin is the work of the devil,) and if he who is born of God does not commit sin, then he must be cleansed from *all* sin. And as long as he stays in that state, he lives without sinning against God. The seed of God remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

How strangely warped and blinded by prejudice are they who, in the face of such evidence as this, still maintain that no man can be saved from his sin in this life, but must daily commit sin in thought, word, and deed, just as the Westminster divines have asserted! That is the same as saying that every man must necessarily sin in as many ways as the devil does. For even the devil himself has no other way of sinning against God further than by thought, word, and deed! And yet, according to these and others of the same creed, "Even the most regenerate sin against God as long as they live."

Ah, but it just means they don't sin as much as they used to.

This is a miserable compromise. They don't sin habitually, only occasionally. Alas for this system! Couldn't the grace that saved them partially save them perfectly? Couldn't the power of God that saved them from habitual sin also save them from occasional or

accidental sin? Should we believe that sin is as powerful as the Spirit and grace of Christ? May we not ask, “If it was for God’s glory and their good that they were partially saved, wouldn’t it have been *more* for God’s glory and their good if they had been *perfectly* saved? But the letter and the spirit of God’s word, and the aim and purpose of Christ’s coming, is to save His people from their sins. The perfection of the gospel system is not that it makes allowances for sin, but that it makes an atonement for it. It is not that it tolerates sin, but that it destroys it.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Be perfect” (Matthew 5:48)?

Why, to be saved from all the power, the guilt, and the contamination of sin. But this is only the negative side of salvation. It also has a positive side: to be made perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect; to be filled with the fulness of God; to have Christ dwelling continually in the heart by faith; and to be rooted and grounded in love.

This is the state in which man was created, for he was made in the image and likeness of God. This is the state from which he fell. And this is the state into which every human soul must be raised who wants to dwell with God in glory. Christ was incarnated and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Him self. What a glorious privilege! Who can doubt the possibility of attaining it, if they believe in the omnipotent love of God, the infinite merit of the blood of the atonement, and the all-pervading and all-purifying energy of the Holy Ghost? How many miserable souls waste their time disputing and cavilling against the possibility of being saved from their sins, when they could be spending their time praying and believing that they might be saved out of the hands of their enemies!

But you are stretching the meaning of the term. Surely it means to be sincere. Perfect obedience is impossible, so God accepts sincerity instead.

If by “sincere” you mean “with generally good purposes, but with an impure heart and a defective life,” then I reply No; it implies no such thing.

But if the word *sincere* is taken in its proper and literal sense, I have no objection to it. “Sincere” is derived from *sine cera*, meaning “without wax”. It was a metaphor taken from clarified honey, from which every particle of the comb or wax is separated. That is sincerity.

Reader, remember that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. Ten thousand quibbles on isolated texts can never lessen, much less destroy, the merit and efficacy of the great atonement. God never issues a precept without offering sufficient grace to enable you to perform it. Believe as He wants you to, and act as He strengthens you.

God is holy. That is why all His people should be holy—purified from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. No faith in any particular creed, no religious observance, no acts of charity, no mortification, attrition, or contrition can substitute for this. We must be made partakers of the divine nature. We must be saved

from our sins—from the corruption that is in the world. We must be holy within and righteous without, or never see God. It was for this purpose Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again, to purify us unto Him self; that through faith in His blood our sins might be blotted out, and our souls restored to the image of God. Reader, do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? If so, blessed are you, for you shall be filled.

But surely this is impossible!

I will be bold and say that those who say this know neither the Scripture nor the power of God. Surely, the Scripture promises the thing, and the power of God can lead us to possess it. The object of all God's promises and dispensations was to bring fallen man back to the image of God, which he had lost. This, indeed, is the sum and substance of the religion of Christ. We have partaken of an earthly, sensual, and devilish nature. God's purpose in Christ is to remove it, and to make us partakers of the divine nature, and save us from all the corruption, in principle and in fact, that is in the world.

It is said that Enoch not only "walked with God," but also that "he pleased God." So it was possible even in that age to live so as not to offend God. He had the continual testimony that all he did was pleasing in the sight of Him who knows all things. If it was possible then, it is surely possible now. God, and Christ, and faith are still the same.

The Lord's Prayer includes the petition "Thy will be done in earth, as is in heaven." This also points to a deliverance from all sin. Nothing unholy can be consistent with the divine will. If that will is fulfilled in a man, surely sin must be banished from his soul. Further, the holy angels never mix sin with their loving obedience. So if our Lord teaches us to pray that we do His will here *as they do in heaven*, are we to think that He would encourage us to pray for something that couldn't be fulfilled?

There are very few large stars in the sky. It is a deplorable thing that, out of the millions of Christians who bask in the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness, how few are of the first order! How very few pass the test of 1 Corinthians 13! How very few love God with all their heart, soul mind, and strength, and their neighbours as themselves! How few mature Christians there are in the church! How few are living for eternity! How little light, how little heat, and how little influence and activity, are found among them that bear the name of Christ! Few are striving to excel in righteousness. Most of them seem to be more concerned with knowing how little grace they can have while still escaping hell.

I say this in the fear of God. Many seem to spend themselves in lowering the standard of Christianity, softening down and explaining away those promises of God that He has linked with duties. Since they know they can't be saved by good works, they are content to have no good works at all. Thus the necessity for Christian obedience and Christian holiness has no place in some modern creeds.

Let all those who hold the apostolic doctrine, that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin in this life, press every believer to go on to perfection. Let them expect to be saved, while

here below, into the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus. To all such I say, Labour to show yourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; and may the pleasure of the Lord prosper in your hands!

One word more. Wouldn't the grace and power of Christ be seen more clearly if He slew the lion instead of keeping him chained? in destroying sin, root and branch, and filling the soul with His own holiness? in filling the mind with all the holy, heavenly tempers that were in Himself, rather than leaving these impure and unholy tempers to live, and often to reign, in the heart? Such a doctrine is discreditable to the gospel. It is completely anti-christian.

But what about 1 Kings 8:46, "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin..."?

This text has been a refuge for those who believe there is no redemption from sin in this life, and that we cannot be entirely free from it until we die. But the text does not teach such a thing. It only speaks of the *possibility* of every man sinning; and this must always be the case while we are in the world.

Note that the second clause of the sentence, as it is translated here, makes the supposition in the first clause ("if they sin") entirely meaningless. If there is no one who doesn't sin, it is pointless to say, "if they sin."

To resolve this contradiction, let us consult the original. It really should be translated, "Should they sin against you—for there is no man that may not sin...". That is, there is no one who is infallible, no one who is not capable of transgressing. This is the true meaning of the phrase in various parts of the Bible. This is the way the translators have understood it, as in v.31 of the same chapter: "If a man trespass...". This implies he might or might not do it. They have translated the same word, "If a soul sin..." in Leviticus 5:1; 6:2; 1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Chronicles 6:22; and several other places. The truth is, the Hebrew has no mood to express words in the permissive or optative way. Instead, it uses the future tense of the conjugation *kal*.

But there are other objections to the idea that this verse teaches that we cannot cease from sinning:

1. There is no other text in the whole Bible that implies it more explicitly than this one.
2. The doctrine is flatly in opposition to the aim of the gospel, for Jesus came to save His people from their sin and to destroy the work of the devil.
3. It is a dangerous and destructive doctrine. There are too many people seeking to excuse their crimes by any means. They don't need us to embody their excuses in a creed, by stating that their sins are unavoidable.

While there is still an empty, longing heart, there is a continual overflowing fountain of salvation. If ever we find that the oil has ceased to flow, it is because there are no empty

vessels there, no souls hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Sometimes we ask, “Why were the days gone by better than these?” If we were we as much in earnest for our salvation as our forefathers were, we would have equal supplies, and as much reason to sing aloud of divine mercy.

Go on to increase in the image and favour of God. Every grace and divine influence that you have received is a heavenly seed which, if it is watered with the dew of heaven from above, will endlessly increase and multiply itself. Whoever continues to believe, love, and obey, will grow in grace, and continually increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, his Sacrifice, Sanctifier, Counsellor, Preserver, and final Saviour.

The life of a Christian is *growth*. He is first born of God as a little child. He then becomes a young man and a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant, and if he hadn't grown he would never have become a man. Those who content themselves with the grace they received when converted are, at best, in a continual state of infancy. However, nature teaches us that the infant that doesn't grow is sick and soon dies. Just so, those who don't grow up into Jesus Christ are sick and will soon die—die to all sense and influence of heavenly things. Many people boast about their conversion—but they never been more than babies. They have long since lost even that grace, because they didn't grow in it.

In order to get a clean heart, a man must know and feel the depravity of his heart, and acknowledge it before God. Few are pardoned; they don't feel and confess their sins. Few are sanctified and cleansed from all sin, because they don't feel and confess the plague of their hearts. Just as the blood of Jesus Christ, applied by faith, purges the conscience from all dead works, so the same cleanses the heart from all unrighteousness. To attempt to evade this, and to plead for the continuance of sin in the heart throughout life, is ungrateful, wicked, and blasphemous.

A man who says he hasn't sinned makes God a liar, because God has declared the contrary through every part of His revelation. Whoever says the blood of Christ either cannot or will not cleanse us from all sin in this life also calls Gods a liar, because He has declared the contrary. Such a person demonstrates that the word of God is not in him.

Reader, it is the birthright of every child of God to be cleansed from all sin, to keep himself unspotted from the world, and so to live as never to offend his Maker. All things are possible to him that believes, because all things are possible to the infinitely meritorious blood and energetic Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

But who has got this blessing?

Everyone who has come to God in the right way for it.

Where can I find someone who has got it?

Seek the blessing as you should, and you will soon be able to answer the question.

But it is too great a blessing to be expected.

Nothing is too great for a believer to expect, if God has promised it and Christ has purchased it with His blood.

If I had such a blessing, I wouldn't be able to retain it.

All things are possible to him that believes. Besides, like all other gifts of God, it comes with a principle of preservation within it.

I can't expect to receive it; I am too unfaithful.

Perhaps the unfaithfulness you deplore is a result of not having the blessing! But no one deserves the least of God's mercies. It is not for your worthiness that He has given you anything, but for the sake of His Son.

But isn't sanctification a gradual work?

Nowhere in Scripture are we directed to seek a gradual holiness. We are to come to God as much for instantaneous and complete purification from all sin, as for instantaneous pardon. The Bible never mentions either a point-by-point pardon, or a gradual purification. Only when the soul is purified from all sin can it properly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can only expect a field to produce a good crop when all the thorns, thistles, briars, and weeds of every kind are grubbed out of it.

Surely what you are describing is greater even than justification.

You say, "When I felt myself a sinner, sinking into perdition, I fled to the atoning blood, and found pardon; but this sanctification is a far greater work." No; justification is far greater than sanctification. When you were a sinner, ungodly, an enemy in your mind by wicked works, a child of the devil, God pardoned you. You cast yourself on the merit of the great sacrificial offering. Your sentence was reversed, your state was changed, and God's Spirit witnessed with yours that you were His child. What a change! What a blessing! Complete sanctification is the cleansing of all that has not been cleansed. It is washing the soul of a true believer from the remains of sin. It is making a child of God more holy, so that he may be more happy, and more useful in the world, and may bring more glory to his heavenly Father.

Great as this work is, how little it is when compared with what God has already done for you! But even if it were ten thousand times greater, is anything too hard for God? Aren't all things possible to him that believes? And doesn't the blood of Christ cleanse from all unrighteousness? Arise, then, and be baptized with a greater outpouring of the Holy Ghost!

Are you weary of the carnal mind that is enmity against God? Can you be happy while you are unholy? Do you know anything of God's love for you? Don't you know that He has given His Son to die for you? Do you love Him in return? Can you love Him a little, without wanting to love Him more? Don't you feel that your happiness grows in proportion to your love and subjection to Him? And don't you know that holiness and happiness are as inseparable as sin and misery? Can you have too much happiness or too much holiness? Can you be made holy and happy too soon? Aren't you weary of a sinful heart? Aren't your bad tempers, pride, anger, fretfulness, covetousness, and all those other unholy passions, a source of misery to you? Surely you can't be unwilling to have them destroyed?

Arise, then, and shake yourself from the dust, and call upon God! His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; His hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Behold, now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation!

But perhaps God wants to do it some time in the future.

God cannot be more willing to save you in the future than he is now. He wants you to love Him *now* with all your heart. But He knows you can't love Him till the enmity of the carnal mind is removed. And He is willing to destroy it at this moment. Turn from every sin; give up every idol; cut off the right hand; pluck out the right eye. Be willing to part with your enemies so that you may receive your greatest friend. The day is far spent, the night is at hand. The graves are ready for you, and here you have no abiding city. A month, a week, a day, an hour, yea, even a moment, may send you into eternity. And if you die in your sins, you will never be where God is.

Whichever way we look at it, it is clear that the blessing of a clean heart, and the happiness consequent on it, may be obtained in this life. It is here, not in the future world, that we are to be saved. Whenever such blessings are offered, they may be received. All the graces and blessings of the gospel are offered at all times, and can be received at all times. If God commands a sinner to turn from his evil way, He expects him to do so now. He doesn't command him to repent today so that he may become penitent some time in the future. A penitent sinner doesn't conclude that the blessing can only be received at some future time. God offers a new heart and a right spirit *now*. You can receive them *now*. It is the work of God; He can do it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is our duty to love God right now with all our heart; and we can't do it until He cleanses our hearts. So He is ready to do it this moment, because He wants us to love Him at this moment.

Such cleansed people never forget the horrible pit and miry clay out of which they have been brought. Can they be proud? No! they loathe themselves in their own sight. They can never forgive themselves for having sinned against such a good God and such a loving Saviour. Can they undervalue Him whose blood bought them, and by whose blood they were cleansed? No! That's impossible. They now see Jesus as they ought to see Him; they see Him in His splendour, because they feel Him in His victory and triumph over sin. As

for their not needing Him after they are saved from their sins, we could just as easily say that the creation doesn't need the sustaining hand of God, because the works are finished! No; just requires the same power to sustain creation as to produce it, so it requires the same Jesus who cleansed to keep us clean.

Don't expect redemption in death. It can do nothing for you. It is your last enemy. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Lay hold on the hope that is set before you. The gate may appear narrow—but strive, and you will pass through! “Come unto me,” says Jesus. Hear His voice, believe at any cost, and struggle into God. Amen and Amen!