

# The Holy Spirit, Sanctification And Sinless Perfection

## Ed Dye

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. We shall begin with two vital points for clarification of the issue on the Holy Spirit, sanctification and sinless perfection.
2. First, the Bible definition of the term “sanctification.”
  - a. It is from the Gr. term *agiadzo* (hag-ee-ad-zo) [Thayer, p.6]: “to make, render or declare sacred or holy, consecrate...to separate from things profane and dedicate to God, to consecrate”...the effect of consecration: “sanctification” of heart and life.
  - b. “The most basic meaning of ‘sanctify’ is separation.” – The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.
  - c. Other recognized lexicographers agree.
  - d. In its various cognates (those having in common the same original word or root; holy, holiness, hallow, hallowed, consecrate, sanctify, saint) it appears more than 1,000 times in the Bible.
3. Second, the sectarian assumed meaning and application of sanctification.
  - a. By the use of a purely assumed meaning of sanctification some sectarian religious organizations have developed, teach and practice the false doctrine of sanctification unto sinless perfection.
  - b. Their doctrine of sanctification is distinct from anything that occurs at the time of conversion to Christ; it supposedly comes later by a different and specific process.
  - c. Their doctrine of sanctification is an alleged “second work of grace,” a “second blessing,” that follows sometime after one’s initial conversion to Christ that is accomplished by baptism with the Holy Spirit which both erases one’s inherited “evil (sinful) nature,” and renders him sinlessly perfect and incapable of sin.
    - (1) I once heard a female Holiness Preacher speaking of herself and her fellow preacher say: “Bro. Seagraves and I couldn’t sin if we wanted to.”

Why? Because they had received this “second work of grace,” this “second blessing.”

- (2) Bro. Wayman D. Miller, reported hearing a man who believed this doctrine say: “Since I have been sanctified, every impulse or desire to sin has been completely erased from my heart.”
  - d. The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968), 30,31, says: “We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin or depravity, and are brought into a state of entire devotement to God, unto the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin, the abiding and indwelling experience of the Holy spirit, empowering the believer to life and service.”
  - e. Another definitive statement of the doctrine is found in the first proposition of the Nichols-Weaver debate. C.J. Weaver affirmed: “The scriptures teach that baptism with the Holy Ghost is for the sanctification of all Christians, the eradication of evil nature, or inborn sin, and is to continue throughout the gospel dispensation, or Christian age.”
4. We shall follow with a history and background of the doctrine, then with Wesleyan “Sanctification” refuted, and finally what scriptural sanctification is.

## **II. DISCUSSION**

### **A. SOME HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE DOCTRINE.**

1. It’s rooted in Calvinism theology.
  - a. When John Calvin enunciated his ***TULIP*** doctrine (the five points doctrine) in the sixteenth century, he spawned a superabundance of doctrinal offshoots that continues to affect millions and millions of people in numerous Denominations, even today.
2. It was responsible for giving birth to John Wesley’s view, who was the founding father of Methodism.

- a. Upon the dual cornerstones of Calvin’s “total hereditary depravity” and “impossibility of apostasy,” John Wesley constructed his doctrine of sanctification in the early eighteenth century.
  - b. According to Daniel Steele, “Sanctification,” *The ISBE* (Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), IV, 2685, Wesley’s view is: “...in the Normal Christian the principle of holiness, beginning with the new birth, gradually expands and strengthens as the believer grows in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, till, by a final, all-surrendering act of faith in Christ, it reaches an instantaneous completion through the act of the Holy Spirit, the sanctified.
3. Just as Calvin’s doctrinal influence has spread far beyond Presbyterianism, so Wesley’s influence on sanctification has gone far beyond the sphere of Methodism with several other groups that follow Wesleyan doctrine on sanctification.
- a. The Nazarenes especially emphasize Wesley’s theories on sanctification and holiness in their approach to conversion then what they call “entire sanctification.”
  - b. For the most part, the Holiness and/or Pentecostal church movement, including Assemblies of God, has come out of the seedbed of Wesley’s “sanctification” emphasis.
    - (1) The very term “Holiness” that is used to describe these groups stems from their preoccupation with Wesley’s theories on the subject.
    - (2) They emphasize, come with us and have or get or acquire the “Pentecostal experience,” which is something you supposedly get sometime after your initial conversion.

**B. THE WESLYAN DOCTRINE OF “SANCTIFICATION” REFUTED.**

- 1. First, a refutation of the total hereditary depravity idea inherent in Wesley’s theory born of the Augustinian-Calvinistic doctrine of an inherent Adamic sinful nature in all.
  - a. The consequences of the doctrine prove it to be a false doctrine – consequences that deny the truth taught in Scripture.

- (1) In Mt.19:14 Jesus said of little children, "...suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is ("to such belongeth,"ASV) the kingdom of heaven."
    - (a) Their theory says babies are born sinners, a child of the devil.
    - (b) If their theory is true then either Jesus lied or didn't know the truth about little children and the kingdom of God belongs to sinners.
  - (2) If their theory is true then the good thoughts, inclinations and good deeds of unsaved persons cannot be either logically or scripturally explained. For their doctrine does not say merely that all men are born devoid of good, but opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil.
    - (a) The record of Cornelius in Ac.10, refutes their theory.
  - (3) As a consequence of their false theory another false theory was given birth, that of the Immaculate Conception granted to the Virgin Mary by God, thus preventing Jesus being born with a sinful nature.
- b. Plain Bible passages refute the false theory of inherited sin making one man responsible for the sin and guilt of another.
- (1) Ezek. 19:4,19,20-30.
  - (2) Ezek.28:15.
  - (3) According to 1Jno.3:4 sin is an aquired thing, not one that in inherited.
  - (4) Rom.13:12; 2Cor.5:10; Rom.2:5-16; Eccl.12:13,14
2. Refuted by a refutation of their false idea of present-day Holy Spirit baptism.
- a. Their sanctification doctrine depends upon their being baptized with the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of sanctification and sinless perfection.
  - b. The promise of being baptized with the Holy Spirit was a promise Jesus made only to his chosen apostles and to no one else at any time and any place, either then or now, Jno.14:25,26; 16:7,13-15; 20:19-23; Lk.24:24-49; Ac.1:1-5,8.

- c. The promise he made to them he fulfilled, Ac.2:1-4.
- d. Contrary to the sanctificationist's claim, the apostles of Christ were not baptized with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of sanctifying or cleansing them from Adamic sin of which they were never guilty in the first place.
- e. Furthermore, being baptized with the Holy Spirit did not mean being made sinlessly perfect, totally incapable of sinning. Proof:
  - (1) Note Peter's case in Gal.2:11-14 who sinned after being baptized with the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) Also, consider Paul's statement in 1Cor.9:27 about his own effort to prevent committing sin, even though he also had been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

### **C. FINALLY, WHAT IS SCRIPTURAL SANCTIFICATION?**

- 1. First, there is what we might identify as "initial" sanctification at the time of one's conversion to Christ when one is washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1Cor.6:11. Cf. Ac.18:8; 1Cor.1:1,2; 12:13.
- 2. In addition to "initial" sanctification, there must be a "progressive" sanctification in the life of each saint as commanded in Rom.6:19; Heb.6:1; 1Pet.1:15; 2Pet.3:18; 1:3-11
- 3. Scriptural sanctification is effected:
  - a. By God, the Father, who is the author, 1Th.5:23.
  - b. By Jesus Christ, the Son, who is the enabling ground, 1Cor.1:30.
  - c. By the Holy Spirit who is the agent, Rom.15:16; 1Cor.6:11.
  - d. By the word of God (the sword of the Spirit, Eph.6:17), which is the means used by the Holy Spirit to convict, convert and to sanctify men, Jno.17:17; Ac.20:32; Eph.5:25,26.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

- 1. The doctrine of entire sanctification and absolute sinless perfection is totally false, totally without biblical basis; it is of men, not of God, Christ or the Holy Spirit.