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THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING
of the Gospel of Christ

By Bishop Willard F. Mallalieu

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DEDICATION

To My Father

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PREFACE

Back to the Wesleys and the Bible. The Bible in its simplicity and power, the Bible as unfolded and illustrated in the poetry and prose of the Wesleys, is really the foundation of the greatest religious movement of the last two most wonderful centuries. Methodism builds on the Word of God. It has no new doctrines, no new and strange theories, no recently invented experiences. Its doctrines, theories, and experiences are those of the Pentecostal Church, and of the earliest centuries of Christianity. Its doctrines are preachable everywhere and always: its theories are reasonable; its experiences are what the immortal souls of men have ever desired and sought. It is believed that this volume will help to a knowledge of these doctrines and theories, and will lead to the enjoyment of the experiences. So shall its readers come to know the Fullness of the Blessing, and thus become efficient and successful co-workers with Christ in saving the race redeemed by his precious blood.

If the hymns and Scripture quotations shall be carefully and prayerfully read, and, so far as possible, committed to memory, they will constitute an intellectual and spiritual treasure of unspeakable value, and will supply a sound body of theology, which will constitute a sure foundation for faith and holy living.

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CONTENTS

- 1
A Precious Reality
- 2
Methodist Hymnology Anticipates The Fullness of the Blessing
- 3
Some Things That Methodism Stands For
- 4
The Fullness of the Blessing Defined
- 5
The Testimony to the Soul's Conversion
- 6
The Holy Spirit's Testimony
- 7
The Testimony of the Fruits
- 8
Inbred Sin and Its Cure
- 9
The Blessing Attained, Gradually or Instantaneously, Which?
- 10
The Fullness of the Blessing, How Obtained?
Enlightenment, Conviction of Need, Loyalty
- 11
The Fullness of the Blessing, How Obtained?
Devotement -- Consecration -- Faith
- 12

Does the Blessing Involve Sinlessness?

13

May the Blessing be Lost?

14

Continual Growth Attends the Fullness of the Blessing

15

The Fullness of the Blessing a Preparation for Christian Work

* * * * *

Chapter 1

A PRECIOUS REALITY

Breathe, O, breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find that second rest.

Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Finish then thy new Creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee:

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

-- Charles Wesley

And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me ... that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed -- Rom. xv, 29, 30, 32.

A hungry world needs to be fed; a helpless world needs help; a perishing world needs relief; a lost world needs salvation. To supply these imperative needs is the loving work of the Triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have together undertaken the vast and blessed task. When

we contemplate this earth on which we live, when we observe what it contains, when we view so much of the universe as comes within the range of human vision, we are lost in wonder and astonishment at the displays of wisdom, skill, and power that everywhere confront us. Nor is it surprising that the psalmist exclaims:

When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
-- Psa. viii, 3, 4.

But the psalmist hastens to answer his own questions, for he goes on to say:

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. -- Psa. viii, 9.

Hence we see that man takes rank with the angels, those pure and mighty intelligences that stand in the immediate presence of God, and serve and worship him day and night. For similar if not identical service God created man in his own image and likeness, and so endowed him with faculties and capabilities that he was fit for the companionship of all holy beings in all worlds. But man fell away from his original state of purity and obedience, and so lost his exalted position in the universe, and his relation of sonship to God. To regain all that he has lost by sin is only possible through the infinite grace and mercy of his Creator.

"'Twas great to speak the world from naught,
'Twas greater to redeem."

Unquestionably the work of redemption has not only been attempted, but perfectly accomplished, so that the sinner may more than regain the paradise from which the parents of the race were expelled; indeed, he may be renewed in the image and likeness of God; he may be delivered from the guilt and corruption and power of sin; he may be cleansed with an uttermost cleansing; he may be endued with power from on high; he may be adopted into the heavenly family, and so become with Jesus Christ an heir of an eternity of blessedness and glory.

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all! the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine;
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left his Father's throne above, --
So free, so infinite his grace! --
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O, my God, it found out me!

-- Charles Wesley

An experience such as this is not the result of the imagination, it is not the fruitage of an insubstantial dream, it is not the product of a fanatical faith. The plan of redemption proposes to remedy all the wreck that sin has made; and this redemption is efficacious for time and for eternity, for soul and body.

And this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. -- John xvii, 3.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. -- 1 John v, 13.

The real eternal life commences with the soul while still abiding in this world. Here we see the beginning, the unfolding, something of the fruitage; in the world to come it will be the more abundant life; for Jesus says:

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. -- John x, 10.

And we may well remember that redemption includes the body as well as the soul.

Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. -- John xi, 25, 26.

Beloved, how are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure. -- 1 John iii, 2, 3.

Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised in corruptible and we shall be changed For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. -- 1 Cor. xv, 51-58.

This victory, which is to be absolute, complete, and eternal, commences in this life and is essentially, in all spiritual things, as real as that which shall be achieved in the world to come. All God's people may abide in the sure confidence that these promises will be fulfilled: "for we have not followed cunningly devised fables." (2 Peter i, 16.)

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Chapter 2

METHODIST HYMNOLOGY ANTICIPATES THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING

O, for a thousand tongues, to sing
My great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

-- Charles Wesley

O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him in psalms. -- Psa. xcv, 1, 2.

O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. -- Psa. xcvi, 1, 2.

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. -- Acts xvi, 25.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and

tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. -- Rev. v, 9, 10.

The poets of Methodism have been of the first order. All Protestantism recognizes this fact. They have caused every chord of the human heart to vibrate. They have given voice to every emotion of the soul. Genuine penitence, complete consecration, appropriating faith, the sweet comfort of pardon, the assurance of justification, the holy joy of the new birth, the lofty inspirations of exultant hope, the highest heights and deepest depths of Christian experience, have all found fitting expression in our hymns.

Theodore Parker is reported as saying on one occasion that Methodist people were accustomed to sing their hymns for the purpose of exciting their emotions and making themselves happy. This man may have known much about many things, but he was all wrong in regard to Methodist singers. He might just as well have said that the birds sing in the springtime for the purpose of exciting their emotions and making themselves happy. Methodists sing, and the birds sing, because they are happy. The poet Shelley had heard the English larks sing, and he writes:

"Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest."

And so let all Methodist people and all other Christian people sing, for no beings this side the gates of pearl have so much reason for singing as those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and have been saved through faith.

There is much theology in the hymns of the Wesleys. This theology is Biblical and experimental. It is a theology that can be preached and lived. It has been exemplified by the good men and women of all ages, but especially in the last hundred and fifty years. The Wesleys were men of exceptional intellectual endowments; they were men of logical minds; their sensibilities were keen; their perceptions were clear and well defined; they had acute mental faculties; they had high powers of imagination; they were strong, vigorous thinkers. The Wesleys were cultured men, most highly cultured for the times in which they lived. They were born and reared in a home where both father and mother were scholarly, and their home associations brought them into terms of intimate fellowship with not a few who were eminent for their learning. All this was supplemented by the training to be derived from the best preparatory schools in England; and this was followed by the full classical course of Oxford University. Thus, when they entered upon the active duties of life, they were probably as well equipped as any two young men in all England. And it must be remembered that they were studious all through their lives, were men of letters, and, besides, all their work as preachers of the gospel, and the organizers and administrators of the greatest religious movement of modern times, they performed an amount of literary labor that was far superior in quality and quantity to any of the writers of their times.

Both John and Charles Wesley had a wonderful religious experience. For years they were faithful in the observance of all the outward forms of religion; they were servants without being the sons of God; they were diligent in prayers and preaching, and in pastoral work and the study of the Bible, in self-denial and self-sacrifice, in almsgiving and fasting; but they did not, for some years after they had entered the ministry, come into the possession of a conscious, joyous experience of salvation. Eventually they found this experience, and then they attained the witness of the Spirit in harmony with the teachings of the Scriptures. We are absolutely sure that these earnest souls did not rest satisfied with this experience. They did not fail to notice the exceeding fullness and scope of the plan of redemption. Concluding from the clear teachings of the Word of God, and from the testimony of multitudes of mature Christians, with whom they were more or less intimately associated, that believers may be wholly sanctified, that they may enter that blessed state where they love God with all the heart, these two brothers, in their public discourses and in their hymns, illustrated, taught, and encouraged such an experience, and it is believed that they both came in due time into its personal enjoyment.

So highly endowed by nature, so thoroughly cultured in the home and the schools, so rich in Christian experience, and both possessed of poetical genius and masters in theology, it is no wonder that the Wesleys have left as a heritage for all God's people such a collection of hymns as have never been excelled in the history of the Christian Church. To any one who studies these hymns it will be manifest that they are of the widest possible range. John Wesley, in the Preface to a Hymn-book which he issued in 1779, takes occasion to say:

"I do not think it inconsistent with modesty to declare that I am persuaded no such Hymn-book as this has yet been published in the English language. In what other publication of the kind have you so full and distinct an account of Scriptural Christianity? such a declaration of the heights and depths of religion, speculative and practical? so strong cautions against the most plausible errors, particularly those that are now most prevalent? and so clear directions for making your calling and election sure, for perfecting holiness in the fear of God?

"May I be permitted to add a few words with regard to the poetry? Then I will speak to those who are judges thereof, with all freedom and unreserve. To these I may say, without offense: 1. In these hymns there is no doggerel; no botches; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme; no feeble expletives. 2. Here is nothing turgid [pretentious, overdone -- DVM] or bombastic on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. 3. Here are no cant [sham -- DVM] expressions; no words without meaning. Those who impute this to us know not what they say. We talk common sense, both in prose and verse, and use no word but in a fixed and determinate sense. 4. Here are, allow me to say, both the purity, the strength, and the elegance of the English language; and, at the same time, the utmost simplicity and plainness suited to every capacity."

These hymns are adapted to each and every phase and degree of Christian experience, and furthermore, next to the Bible are they full of inspiration, encouragement, full of warning and entreaty, full of calls to penitence and reformation, full of promise and instruction, full of all comfort and helpfulness to those who desire to know the possibilities, even the highest possibilities and attainments of the Christian life. These hymns are full of faith, hope, love, victory; they are for the living and dying, the rejoicing and the suffering, the triumphant and the struggling in all lands and for all times.

Any sincere soul will be very greatly helped in the search for a clean heart, and for perfect love by the careful study of the hymns of the Wesleys which relate to these all-important matters. If with these hymns there might be combined some precious passage of the Word of God, it would seem that any one might find the green pastures and the still waters to which the good Shepherd welcomes all his flock.

How better can we close this chapter than to offer from the heart the prayers of the following selections from the Wesleyan hymns? They have expressed the earnest longings of millions of souls on earth and in glory, and richest blessings have been realized in their use. God waits to be gracious to all who seek him, to all who search for him with all the heart, to all who importunately cry to him.

Come, Savior, Jesus, from above,
Assist me with thy heavenly grace;
Empty my heart of earthly love,
And for thyself prepare the place.

Nothing on earth do I desire
But thy pure love within my breast;
This, only this, will I require,
And freely give up all the rest.

-- Tr. by John Wesley

O, that with all thy saints I might
By sweet experience prove
What is the length, and breadth, and height,
And depth of perfect love!

-- Charles Wesley

The thing my God doth hate
That I no more may do,
Thy creature, Lord again create,
And all my soul renew:
My soul shall then like thine,
Abhor the thing unclean,
And, sanctified by love divine,
Forever cease from sin.

-- Charles Wesley

O, come, and dwell in me,
Spirit of power within!
And bring the glorious liberty

From sorrow, fear, and sin.
The seed of sin's disease,
Spirit of health, remove,
Spirit of finished holiness,
Spirit of perfect love.

-- Charles Wesley

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Chapter 3 SOME THINGS THAT METHODISM STANDS FOR

Hark, how the watchmen cry!
Attend the trumpet's sound:
Stand to your arms, the foe is nigh,
The powers of hell surround.
Who bow to Christ's command,
Your arms and hearts prepare;
The day of battle is at hand
Go forth to glorious war.

See on the mountain-top
The standard of your God;
In Jesus' name I lift it up,
All stained with hallowed blood.
His standard-bearer, I
To all the nations call:
Let all to Jesus' cross draw nigh;
He bore the cross for all.

Go up with Christ your Head;
Your Captain's footsteps see;
Follow your Captain, and be led
To certain victory.
All power to him is given;
He ever reigns the same:
Salvation, happiness, and heaven,
Are all in Jesus' name.

-- Charles Wesley

Urge on your rapid course,
Ye blood-besprinkled bands;
The heavenly kingdom suffers force;
'Tis seized by violent hands:

See there the starry crown
That glitters through the skies;
Satan, the world, and sin, tread down,
And take the glorious prize.

Through much distress and pain,
Through many a conflict here,
Through blood, ye must the entrance gain,
Yet, O, disdain to fear:
"Courage!" your Captain cries,
Who all your toil foreknew;
"Toil ye shall have, yet all despise;
I have O'ercome for you."

The world can not withstand
Its ancient Conqueror;
The world must sink beneath the hand
Which arms us for the war:
This is the Victory,
Before our faith they fall;
Jesus hath died for you and me;
Believe, and conquer all.

-- Charles Wesley

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? -- Heb. ii, 1-4.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. -- Eph. iv, 14, 15.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds. -- 2 John 9-11.

Doubtless Methodism is the greatest religious movement of the last two hundred years. At present [1903] it encircles the world and reaches from pole to pole. Strictly speaking, it is not theological in its origin or development. It never has claimed that it has discovered, much less originated, any new doctrine. It has held fast to the theory that, so far as doctrines are concerned,

the old are true, and the new are false, and the newer the doctrines, the more likely they are to be false. It has always had substantial faith in the supernatural element in the Bible. It has had a firm belief in the reality of inspiration, that holy men wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Never, in the slightest degree, has Methodism confounded the inspiration of the Scriptures with the so-called inspiration of the writings of Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, and Homer. Hence Methodism has always had implicit faith in the Biblical prophets and their prophecies; has believed that the prophets were illuminated; that they clearly saw the things that were to be unfolded in the far-distant ages; that their horizon was not bounded by the things about them, but, rather, when lifted on wheels of fire and wings of flame, their vision was vast as the thoughts of God, and only limited by the horizons of eternity. Methodism has never doubted concerning the recorded miracles of the Bible. It has believed in them all, and has had no trouble in so doing, for it has always recognized an Almighty God as an ever-present factor in the performance of all these miracles.

Methodism has never assumed to classify the recorded miracles of the Bible, counting some as altogether unworthy of being ascribed to Divine action, some others of a doubtful character, and a few others that God might properly perform. It certainly has never sneered at the floating ax, nor the fleece of Gideon, nor the story of Jonah, nor any others. Nor has it set itself up as a judge of what might be ethically proper or improper for the Ruler of this earth to do in dealing with the vile and utterly-depraved inhabitants of Canaan, with Sodom and other scenes of catastrophes in which thousands of the innocent have suffered and perished; it still holds fast to the theory that what is done by the Judge of all the earth is right.

Again, Methodism has always had a theory of the atonement. At least it has steadfastly believed that in the fall of Adam all his posterity has been disastrously affected; that moral depravity has touched every soul; that this depravity has been universal rather than total. Then it has held that the atonement is coextensive with the needs of man, and that the claims of Divine justice have been so fully satisfied that God can be just, the moral government of the universe vindicated, and at the same time all can be saved who comply with the easy terms of redemption's plan. All prison doors are open, all chains and shackles unloosed, so that any soul may be delivered from the bondage of Satan, and come to enjoy the freedom of the sons of God.

Experimentally, Methodism, from the very first, has had a plain, practical, Scriptural faith. Starting on the assumption that salvation was possible for every redeemed soul, and that all souls are redeemed, it has held fast to the fundamental doctrine that repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ are the divinely-ordained conditions upon which all complying therewith may be saved, who are intelligent enough to be morally responsible, and have heard the glad tidings of salvation. At the same time Methodism has insisted that all children who are not willing transgressors, and all irresponsible persons, are saved by the grace of God manifest in the atoning work of Christ; and, further, that all in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness, are accepted of him, through the Christ that died for them, though they have not heard of him. This view of the atonement has been held and defended by Methodist theologians from the very first. And it may be said with ever-increasing emphasis that it commends itself to all sensible and unprejudiced thinkers, for this, that it is rational and Scriptural, and at the same time honorable to God and gracious and merciful to man.

Methodism has always held that, when the sinner complies with the conditions of salvation, when his penitence is sincere and thorough, when his faith takes hold on the promises of God, when he implicitly and fully trusts in Christ as his all-sufficient Savior, God then pardons the penitent and believing sinner; he freely pardons, forgives him, for the sake of Christ, so that no sin remains charged against the one who is pardoned. At the same time God justifies, and this justification is so complete and all-inclusive that the relations of God and the sinner are changed; the prodigal is not only forgiven, but he is received into the paternal home, and he is clothed and feasted as a son. He is no longer an alien and an outcast, but he becomes a son and an heir. Regeneration is involved in pardon and justification. Old things have passed away, and, behold, all things become new. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are brought to life. It is a new birth. The soul is born from above. It was Jesus who said:

Except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God ... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit -- John iii, 3, 5, 6.

The great Teacher did not attempt to explain the process of regeneration. He declares its reality, and insists upon its necessity, and makes known the fact that it is wrought by the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and does not invoke metaphysics or psychology to explain the methods of the Spirit. There are mysteries in connection with all life, and so there are mysteries connected with the new birth of the soul. John tells us that "He [Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John i, 11.) The Jewish people rejected him, and put him to death, and to this day he is rejected by them.

But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. -- John i, 12, 13.

Methodism has always insisted upon the reality of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the adoption of the regenerated soul into the household of God. Indeed, it has claimed that the Spirit witnesses to the reality of every state of grace in the Divine life in the soul. God reveals himself to men in the realm of nature:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. -- Rom. i, 20.

Much more definitely and clearly does he reveal himself in the spiritual realm than in the material realm. Methodism accepts both revelations as equally real and within the range of human knowledge.

It is still further to be observed that Methodism has always held to the Scriptural doctrine of perfect love, of entire sanctification, of holiness in heart and life -- of the experience of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel by whatever name it may be called. The Lord Jesus Christ, in Methodist theology, has ever been held to be a Redeemer and Savior resourceful enough to meet

all the requirements of an uttermost salvation. The history of Methodism shows that millions upon millions have been thus gloriously saved.

These fundamentals and essentials, not one of which is in any sense new, Methodism has always held, and still holds them, and it is to be devoutly hoped will ever hold them, despite the varying whims and fads and foolish vagaries that ever and anon make their appearance. And we propose to maintain these essentials of faith, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. iv, 13.)

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Chapter 4 THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING DEFINED

Ever fainting with desire,
For thee, O Christ, I call;
Thee I restlessly require;
I want my God, my all.
Jesus, dear redeeming Lord,
I wait thy coming from above;
Help me, Savior, speak the word,
And perfect me in love.

-- Charles Wesley

O Thou, to whose all-searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart, it pants for thee;
O burst these bonds, and set it free!

Wash out its stains, refine its dross,
Nail my affections to the cross;
Hallow each thought; let all within
Be clean, as thou, my Lord, art clean.

-- Charles Wesley

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

unto him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. -- Eph. ii, 14-21.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. -- James i, 4.

Unquestionably, if the wonderful prayer of the Apostle Paul should be fulfilled in behalf of any regenerated soul, there would be experienced the fullness of the blessing of the gospel. Paul knew for what he prayed, and yet it will be noticed that the climax of his prayer calls for all the fullness of the Godhead to be imparted. No soul has ever yet been able to express in words all that was in the mind of Paul when he said, "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." It is not an unreasonable prayer, or Paul would not have uttered it. It implies that every believer in Ephesus might claim the blessing sought, and so also it implies that every believer from the time the prayer was offered until the time when probation closes, may claim an interest in all that it embraces.

It seems unfortunate that in the discussion of any subject there should arise confusion and misunderstanding from using the same words, expressions, or terms with a varying signification. This is especially to be deprecated in scientific or theological matters; and yet we find in both constant occasion for regret that we do not use words with a definite and fixed meaning. It is only left for us to do the best we can with the words that are employed, always remembering that it not infrequently happens that the different words sometimes express certain peculiar phases of a general work of grace.

"Mr. Wesley used a great variety of terms expressive of this work of grace. In those given we have 'Perfect love,' 'glorious liberty,' 'the whole image of God,' 'full salvation,' 'pure love of God,' 'second change,' 'renewed in love,' 'full sanctification,' 'holiness,' 'a clean heart,' 'entire salvation,' 'Christian perfection,' 'perfected in love,' 'saved from sin,' 'the root of sin taken away,' 'sanctification,' 'full renewal in His image,' and 'cleansed from all sin.' He used the term 'renewed in love' more frequently than any other."

Not only these terms employed by Mr. Wesley, but others are employed by various writers, to express that state of grace, or that condition of Christian experience, which is implied in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

It will surely be profitable to note carefully the definitions which are given by Mr. Wesley, whatever the term he may use to designate the experience. Defining perfection, he says:

What is, then, the perfection of which man is capable, while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command, "My son, give me thy heart." It is the "loving the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is the sum of Christian perfection; it is all comprised in that one word, love. The first branch of it is the love of God; and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets;" these contain the whole of Christian perfection. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 168

I believe it to be an inward thing, namely, the life of God in the soul of man; a participation of the Divine nature; the mind that was in Christ; or, the renewal of our heart, after the image of Him that created us. -- Journal, September, 1739

But what is the perfection here spoken of? It is not only a deliverance from doubts and fears, but from sin; from all inward as well as outward sin; from evil desires and evil tempers, as well as from evil words and works. Yea, and it is not only a negative blessing, a deliverance from all evil dispositions, implied in that expression, "I will circumcise thy heart," but a positive one likewise, even the planting all good dispositions in their place, clearly implied in that expression, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." -- John Wesley, Journal, March, 1775

What is the meaning of perfection? is another question; but that it is a Scriptural term is undeniable. Therefore, none ought to object to the use of the term whatever they may do to this or that explication of it. I am very willing to consider whatever you have to object to what is advanced under the first head of that sermon. But I still think that perfection is only another term for holiness or the image of God in man. "God made man perfect," I think, is just the same as "He made him holy," or, "in his own image." -- John Wesley, Works, Vol. VI, p. 535

The moment a sinner is justified his heart is cleansed in a low degree; but yet he has not a clean heart, in the full, proper sense, till he is made perfect in love. -- John Wesley, Journal, 1744, Vol. V, p. 284

There is scarce any expression in Holy Writ which has given more offense than this -- the word perfect is what many can not bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them, and whosoever preaches perfection (as the phrase is), i. e., asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them worse than a heathen man or a publican.

And hence some have advised wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions, "because they have given so great offense." But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority can any messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ, neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath spoken, that will we speak, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, knowing that then alone can any minister of Christ be "pure from the blood of all men," when he hath "not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God" -- John Wesley, Sermons, Vol. I, p. 355

Perhaps the general prejudice against Christian perfection may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and continually declare there is no such perfection in this life as implies either a dispensation from doing good and attending all the ordinances of God, or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

The perfection I teach, is perfect love; loving God with all the heart, receiving Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, to reign alone over all our thoughts, words and actions. -- John Wesley

In the year 1764, upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short propositions:

"(1) There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.

"(2) It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to 'go on unto perfection.' (Heb. vi, 1.)

"(3) It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect. (Phil. iii, 15.)

"(4) It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.

"(5) It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible, while he remains in the body.

"(6) Is it sinless? It is not worthwhile to contend for a term. It is salvation from sin.

"(7) It is 'perfect love.' (I John iv, 18.) This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks. (I Thess. v, 16, etc.)

"(8) It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before." -- John Wesley

In 1749, he taught:

"1. Christian Perfection is that love of God and our neighbors which implies deliverance from all sin.

"2. That this is received merely by faith.

"3. That it is given instantaneously, in one moment.

"That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; 'that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation.' " -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 500

Look at it again; survey it on every side, and that with the closest attention. In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all, our soul, body, and substance, to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Now, take it in which of these views you please (for there is no material difference), and this is the

whole and sole perfection, as a train of writings prove to a demonstration, which I have believed and taught for these forty years, from the year 1725 to the year 1765. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 483

Now let this perfection appear in its native form, and who can speak one word against it? Will any dare to speak against loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves? against a renewal of heart, not only in part, but in the whole image of God? Who is he that will open his mouth against being cleansed from all pollution both of flesh and spirit; or against having all the mind that was in Christ, and walking in all things as Christ walked? What man, who calls himself a Christian, has the hardiness to object to the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God? What serious man would oppose the giving God all our heart, and the having one desire ruling all our tempers? I say again, let this Christian perfection appear in its own shape, and who will fight against it? -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 483

The pure in heart are those whose hearts God hath purified even as he is pure; who are purified through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affection; who, being cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the (loving) fear of God. They are, through the power of his grace, purified from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and gentleness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love him more and more, by that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which now engrosses their whole soul; so that now they love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and mind, and strength. -- John Wesley, Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 199

Tyerman Says, in his "Life of Wesley," that at the first Conference, in 1774, Christian perfection was defined:

A renewal in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. To be a perfect Christian is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, implying the destruction of all inward sin, and faith is the condition and instrument by which such a state of grace is obtained. -- Tyerman, Vol. I. p. 444

It is not easy to conceive what a difference there is between that which he experiences now, and that which he experienced before. Till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was mixed. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride; he was meek, but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently dampened by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbor. by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the will of God; but although in general he could say, I come, "not to do my own will, but the will of of Him that sent me;" yet now and then nature rebelled and he could not clearly say, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt." His whole soul is now consistent with itself; there is no jarring string. -- John Wesley, Sermons, Vol. II p. 222

Certainly sanctification (in the proper sense) is "an instantaneous deliverance from all sin;" and includes "an instantaneous power then given, always to cleave to God." Yet this sanctification (at least, in the lower degrees) does not include a power never to think a useless thought, nor even speak a useless word. I, myself, believe that such a perfection is inconsistent with living in a

corruptible body: for this makes it impossible "always to think right." While we breathe, we shall, more or less, mistake. If, therefore, Christian perfection implies this, we must not expect it till after death.

I want you to be all love. This is the perfection I believe and teach. And this perfection is consistent with a thousand nervous disorders, which that high strained perfection is not. Indeed, my judgment is, that (in this case particularly) to overdo is to undo; and that to set perfection too high (so high as no man that we ever heard or read of attained) is the most effectual (because unsuspected) way of driving it out of the world. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 718

We have known a large number of persons, of every age and sex, from early childhood to extreme old age, who have given all the proofs, which the nature of the thing admits, that they were "sanctified throughout;" "cleansed from all pollution both of flesh and spirit," that they "loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength;" that they continually presented their souls and bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;" in consequence of which, they "rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in everything gave thanks." And this, and no other, is what we believe to be true, Scriptural sanctification. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 247

By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard-seed, which at first is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love of God and man. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 236

To W. Churchey, 1771:

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love; love expelling sin, and governing both the heart and the life of a child of God. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 82

To Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, in 1767:

The essential part of Christian holiness is giving the heart wholly to God; and certainly we need not lose any degree of that light and love which at first attend this: it is our own infirmity if we do; it is not the will of the Lord concerning us. Your present business is, not to reason whether you should call your experience thus or thus; but to go straight to him that loves you, with all your wants, how great or how many soever they are. Then all things are ready; help, while you ask, is given. You have only to receive it by simple faith. Nevertheless, you will still be encompassed with numberless infirmities; for you live in a house of clay, and therefore this corruptible body will, more or less, press down the soul, yet not so as to prevent your rejoicing evermore, and having a witness that your heart is his. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 51

There is one term that is sometimes used to express the experience of full salvation, that is occasionally treated in a sarcastic manner that is altogether without excuse. Persons speak of the "Second Blessing," and say, "Why, how about the third blessing, and the fourth blessing, and the ninety-ninth blessing?" It is unfortunate that any term employed by sincere people should be made the subject of derision. Better by far avoid all such forms of speech, and treat this important phase of Christian experience with all candor, and give large liberty in the use of the common terms that are employed by those who profess to have found it. The Wesleys did not hesitate to use this term "Second Blessing," and they used it with a clear and definite meaning. It was used as the equivalent of perfect love, entire sanctification, holiness, and Christian perfection.

Lord, if I on thee believe,
The second gift impart;
With the indwelling Spirit give
A new, a contrite heart;

Take me into thee, my Lord,
And I shall then no longer rove:
Help me, Savior, speak the word,
And perfect me in love.

-- Charles Wesley

Savior of the sinsick soul,
Give me faith to make me whole!
Finish thy great work of grace,
Cut it short in righteousness.

Speak the second time, "Be clean!"
Take away my inbred sin;
Every stumbling-block remove;
Cast it out by perfect love.

-- Charles Wesley

To Miss Jane Hilton, 1766:

Do you now feel anything like anger, or pride, self-will, or any remains of the carnal mind? Was your second deliverance wrought while I was at Beverly? at the time of the sermon, or after it? You did not tell me, in what manner you found the change; and whether it has continued without any intermission from that moment. Certainly there never need be any decay: there never will, if you continue watching unto prayer. --Works, Vol. VII, p. 42

To Miss Jane Hilton, 1774:

It is exceeding certain that God did give you the second blessing, properly so called. He delivered you from the root of bitterness, from inbred, as well as actual, sin. And at that time you

were enabled to give Him all your heart; to rejoice evermore, and to pray without ceasing. Afterward, he permitted his work to be tried; and sometimes as by fire. For a while you were not moved; but could say in all things, "Good is the will of the Lord." But it seems you gave way, by little and little, till you were in some measure shorn of your strength." -- Works, Vol. VII, p. 45

I had desired S. M. to give me some further account of the late work of God at Barnard Castle. Part of his answer was as follows: "Within ten weeks, at least twenty persons in this town have found peace with God, and twenty-eight the pure love of God. This morning, before you left us, one found peace, and one the second blessing." -- Journal, June, 1763

Certainly these quotations abundantly justify the use of the term "Second Blessing" by all followers of John and Charles Wesley. And should not every sincere Christian avoid the sarcastic use of this term to throw reproach upon the doctrine of perfect love, or to discredit the experience of any child of God? Above all things, why not agree to seek for all the riches of grace that God has provided, and steadfastly refuse to contend about words and definitions? There are heights and depths and lengths and breadths that we may not be able to measure with our poor human words. Let us, then, following the leadings of the Spirit and the teachings of the Scriptures and the example of the saints of all ages, seek for the experience till we find it for ourselves.

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Chapter 5 THE TESTIMONY TO THE SOUL'S CONVERSION

I ask the blood-bought pardon sealed,
The liberty from sin,
The grace infused, the love revealed,
The kingdom fixed within.

My restless soul cries out, oppressed,
Impatient to be freed;
Nor can I, Lord, nor will I rest,
Till I am saved indeed.

Thou canst, thou wilt, I dare believe,
So arm me with thy power,
That I to sin may never cleave,
May never feel it more.

-- Charles Wesley

Send us the Spirit of thy Son,
To make the depths of Godhead known,
To make us share the life divine;
Send him the sprinkled blood to apply;
Send him our souls to sanctify,

And show and seal us ever thine.

-- Charles Wesley

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. -- 2 Cor. v, 17

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. -- 1 John iii, 14.

When we speak of conversion, we mean, and this is the common acceptance of the term, that all that is included in the terms pardon, justification, and regeneration is included in the term conversion. Now, Methodism has constantly and strenuously declared that, in this experience, this threefold experience of pardon, justification, and regeneration, the one having the experience must be cognizant of the fact; and just at this point Methodism has differed with many most excellent Christian people who have claimed that it has not been within the scope of human knowledge to cognize either the fact of pardon, justification or regeneration; but the doubts and fears and uncertainty of these good people have not deterred Methodists from declaring that they know that they have passed from death unto life.

Methodists have held that there is a fourfold evidence of the experience of personal salvation involving the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to the adoption of the, regenerated soul into the heavenly family. First of all, there is the testimony of consciousness. The mind cognizes its own states and condition. It distinguishes between joy and sorrow, between pleasure and pain, between assurance and fear, between expectation and disappointment, between hope and despair. In the threefold experience already alluded to, joy takes the place of sorrow, pleasure takes the place of pain, assurance takes the place of fear, expectation takes the places of disappointment, and hope takes the place of despair. It is impossible that the mind in its normal condition should not distinguish these radically different conditions or states. Then, again, the Scriptures represent the change involved, as a change from darkness to light, from sickness to health, from death to life. From these various and striking illustrations the absolutely necessary inference is that the person who passes through these experiences must know that he has done so. His consciousness testifies to the reality of the experience. Or, if we use a short, plain, Saxon word, we say that our feelings are changed; we feel the peace, the joy, the comfort, and hope that we never knew while in a state of sin. With this newly-found experience the convert can but sing:

How happy every child of grace,
Who knows his sins forgiven!
"This earth," he cries, "is not my place,
I seek my place in heaven, --
A country far from mortal sight;
Yet O, by faith I see
The land of rest, the saints' delight,
The heaven prepared for me."

O, what a blessed hope is ours!

While here on earth we stay,
We more than taste the heavenly powers,
And antedate that day:
We feel the resurrection near,
Our life in Christ concealed,
And with his glorious presence here
Our earthen vessels filled.

O, would he more of heaven bestow,
And let the vessels break,
And let our ransomed spirits go
To grasp the God we seek;
In rapturous awe on him to gaze,
Who bought the sight for me;
And shout and wonder at his grace
Through all eternity!

-- Charles Wesley

Certainly, it would be well if Christian people would more thoroughly familiarize themselves with the teaching of John Wesley in matters relating to personal religious experience. Let us notice a few of the many things he says concerning the testimony of our own consciousness to the fact of our conversion:

TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN SPIRITS

God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular, we are capable of perceiving what passes in our own hearts or lives; of knowing what we feel or do; and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say that man is a conscious being; he hath a consciousness, or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself, of his own tempers, and outward behavior. Wesley's Sermons, Vol, II, p. 101

WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." -- Wesley's Works, Vol. II, p. 385

THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT, AND THIS ANTEDATES ANY WORKS OF OUR OWN

It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the Word of God, as belonging to his adopted children; even a loving heart towards God, and towards all mankind; hanging with childlike confidence on God our Father, desiring

nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 87

TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS, OR THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

"Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" It is by no means clear that they did not know this by a direct as well as a remote witness. How is it proved that they did not know it, first by an inward consciousness; and then by love, joy, and peace? -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 98

THE WITNESS OR TESTIMONY OF OUR OWN SPIRIT

That no man can be justified, and not know it, appears farther from the nature of the thing; for faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. V, p. 195

WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT AT TIME OF CONVERSION

And first, as to the witness of our spirit. The soul as intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delight' in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt whether it loves, delights, and rejoices or no, than whether it exists or no. If, therefore, this be just reasoning, he that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in him with a humble joy and holy delight and an obedient love, is a child of God. But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God; therefore I am a child of God -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I p. 88

WITNESS OF OUR SPIRIT AT CONVERSION

How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness, or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noonday sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness; and between the light wherewith the Sun of righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light which arises from "sparks of our own kindling;" and this difference also is immediately and directly perceived if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, pp. 91, 92

Closely following the testimony of our own consciousness, our own feelings, is what may be called the testimony of the intellect. In the Word of God there are certain conditions made known that are essential to salvation. In connection with these conditions we find the promises of God again and again repeated, assuring us in the most positive and explicit terms that the soul that complies with them will surely come to the experience of salvation. It is perfectly wonderful how gracious, emphatic, and abundant are the promises of God, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament:

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. -- Isa. xlv, 22

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. -- Matt. xi, 28

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. -- Isa. lv, 7

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. -- Acts xvi, 31

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart, and I will be found of you, saith the Lord. -- Jer. xxix, 12, 13

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. -- John iii, 16, 17

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. -- Rom., 9, 10, 11

Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. -- Acts iii, 19

Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. -- Isa. i, 18

It is evident that natural temperament has much to do with our personal religious experience. We have the emotional and the intellectual. The emotional laughs or cries easily and frequently; the purely intellectual seldom laughs or cries. One acts on the impulse of the moment, the other acts only after investigation and consideration. Neither ought to expect an identical experience with the other when converted. This would be altogether unreasonable. But let either take the promises that have just been quoted, and go to God with them in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ, and, in answer to simple confiding faith, conversion will follow.

The intellectual temperament may not manifest the exuberant and exultant joy of the emotional temperament, but the person having it will just as certainly rest in the assurance that his sins are forgiven, for he has complied with the Divine conditions. It must be that an honest and sincere soul knows whether or not he has complied with these plain and possible conditions; then, if he has, he has a right to believe, and say, this belief and affirmation being based on the sure promise of God, that his sins are forgiven, he is justified and regenerated, and has been changed from an outcast to a son, from an alien to a fellow-citizen of the saints, and has become a member of the household of God. This testimony is the result of a purely intellectual process, with absolute

surrender to Christ and with unwavering faith as its foundation and inspiration. But it should be remembered that, often, when salvation is experienced in this way, the calm and sometimes icy methods of the intellect give way to wonderful manifestations of joy and gladness, that can only find expression in shouts, and tears, and smiles, and jubilant songs.

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Chapter 6 THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
Mighty, and merciful, and just;
Thy sacred Word is past;
And I, who dare thy Word believe,
Without committing sin shall live,
Shall live to God at last.

I rest in thine Almighty power;
The name of Jesus is my tower
That hides my life above:
Thou canst, thou wilt, my helper be;
My confidence is all in thee,
The faithful God of love.

-- Charles Wesley

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. -- Rom. viii, 15, 16, 17

The third testimony to the soul's conversion is that of the Holy Spirit. In this it is assumed that in some way the Holy Spirit communicates with the human soul and gives specific testimony to the fact of adoption into the heavenly family. There are those who doubt in regard to this form of testimony, notwithstanding the direct and explicit declarations of the Word of God.

No one doubts that one human intelligence can communicate with another. And it is equally clear that more than one method of communication is possible. It may be by a glance of the eye, by a smile or a frown, by a gesture, by the pressure of the hand, by a whisper or a full tone; but no one need be limited to either of these methods, for there is an almost endless variety of ways by which thoughts, ideas, suggestions, may be communicated from one person to another.

If, then, finite intelligences can thus communicate, why should any one hesitate to believe that the Holy Spirit, the Infinite Intelligence, can communicate with the finite? It would be far more

rational to say that, as much greater as the Infinite is than the finite, so much greater the possibility, the probability indeed, that the Infinite may and will communicate with the finite.

But in these personal experiences it is very natural that persons mark out the process by which such communications shall be made. Time and place and method are wrongly supposed to be essential. Here again it may be said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We may rest assured that the Spirit will not yield to human dictation, and will not necessarily favor preconceived notions. There must be no attempt at dictation, there must be no insistence upon the gratification of human wishes and preferences.

The Spirit's testimony is sometimes as unseen and silent as the falling dew. The dew is a blessed and refreshing reality, though we may neither see it nor hear it as it falls upon leaf and flower. So in the soul there may be a quiet as absolute as the movement of light, but at the same time there is a sweet assurance of salvation and sonship that will not admit of the slightest doubt. Or, again, the testimony of the Spirit may come to the soul as a still small voice, as gentle and soft as the mother's whisper of love in the ear of the little babe nestling in the enfolding arms. Why not be content when thus the Spirit communicates with a trusting soul? Why prefer the silence of the falling dew to the still small voice? Surely, God was revealing himself to the prophet in the way that was best suited to his needs when thus he came to him in the still small voice, but God was present revealing himself to Moses when Sinai's trembling beneath the footfalls of the Almighty sent a quiver and a thrill to the very center and heart of the earth. So, God was present revealing himself when the prison at Philippi shook from lowest foundation to highest turret and finial when it felt the mighty throbbing of the earthquake. God's earthquake came, and bars and bolts were removed, and all doors swung wide open, and stocks and fetters were unloosed.

The best way is to let God have his own way. The best time is God's time. The best place is God's place. The soul that patiently waits, that fully trusts, that leaves time and place and method all to God, will not be disappointed. The promise will not fail. It never has failed. It can not fail, for God is faithful.

Let it be noticed that the promise has direct reference to the matter of adoption, while at the same time it inferentially includes all that precedes in the experience of a penitent believer. It thus includes repentance, faith, pardon, justification, and regeneration. These all precede adoption, and are prerequisites. There can be no testimony to adoption independent of these; hence we say that the testimony to one's adoption includes the testimony concerning them.

It is equally clear and certain that the Holy Spirit does testify to the reality and actual possession of the fullness of the blessing. The Spirit witnesses just as definitely to the experience of sanctification as to that of adoption. By whatever name the experience may be called, it is found by the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit will bear witness to his own work. This witness may be delayed, it may not come in accordance with preconceived notions, it may not involve any anticipated manifestations, but it will come.

There are numerous passages in the Scriptures that clearly teach that the Holy Spirit does testify concerning the relations of the believer to God. We read:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. -- Rom. viii, 14

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.
-- 1 John iv, 13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. -- Eph. 1, 13, 14

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. -- Rom. viii, 9

And this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. -- I John iii, 23, 24

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. -- 2 Cor. i, 21, 22

Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit. -- 2 Cor. v, 5

Let it be clearly understood that the witness of the Holy Spirit does not involve the idea of anything that can be perceived by any or all of the five senses. It is surely not impossible to imagine that the Spirit might communicate with us in this way, and possibly he has done so in some instances, but no one has any good ground for supposing that such will be his experience. The Spirit's communications are not made by signs in the heavens or on the earth, and certainly not through preternatural or supernatural visions or dreams. Views different from these just expressed would evidently lead to all sorts of fanaticism and folly. Wesley gave special prominence to the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit, and his teachings in regard to it are as important and needful at the present time as they were when he lived among men. He says:

None who believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God can doubt the importance of such a truth as this; a truth revealed therein, not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally, but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. 1, p. 93

Again, of this doctrine, the witness of the Spirit, he says:

When may a person judge himself to have attained this?

When, after having been convinced of inbred sin, by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification

of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks. Not that "to feel all love and no sin" is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification. -- Plain Account

The design of that witness is to assure us we are the children of God; and this design it does answer. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 100

It is certain, over and above those other graces which the Holy Spirit inspires into, or operates in, a Christian, and over and above his imperceptible influences; I do intend all mankind should understand me to assert ... every Christian believer hath a perceptible testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 641

"The same Spirit beareth witness with our spirit." (Rom. viii, 16.) With the spirit of every true believer, by a testimony distinct from that of his own spirit, or the testimony of a good conscience. Happy they who enjoy this, clear and constant. -- Wesley's Notes on Rom. viii, 16

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT PRECEDES THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are children of God. And it is not questioned whether there is a testimony of the Spirit, but whether there is any direct testimony; whether there is any other than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit We believe there is ... because, in the nature of the thing, the testimony must precede the fruit which springs from it. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 99

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT -- IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

It more nearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend the doctrine; because it is one great part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his peculiar blessing upon them in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of his children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 93

THE METHOD OF THE SPIRIT'S DIRECT WITNESS

Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by the inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart (though he often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm, the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered."

Now, what is the matter of dispute concerning this? Not whether there be a witness or testimony of the Spirit; not whether the Spirit does testify with our spirit, that we are the children of God; none can deny this, without flatly contradicting the Scriptures, and charging a lie upon God. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 94

THE DIRECT WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

What, then, is the other witness? This might easily be learned, if the text ("The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," (Rom. viii, 16) were not sufficiently clear, from the verse immediately preceding: "Ye have received, not the spirit of bondage, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii, 15) It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

This is farther explained by the parallel text, Gal. iv, 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Is not this something immediate and direct, not the result of reasoning or argumentation? Does not the Spirit cry, "Abba, Father," in our hearts the moment it is given, antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity? Yes, to any reasoning whatsoever! And is not this the plain natural sense of the words which strikes any one as soon as he hears them? All these texts, then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 95

But this only applies to the direct witness of the Spirit, for before the fruits of the Spirit are really and fully manifest as set forth in Gal. vi, 22, 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," there has come to the soul the direct witness of the Spirit to the fact of adoption. The fruits of the Spirit attend and follow this direct witness of the Spirit to the one blessed fact of personal adoption. As long as the fruits abide the Spirit will continue his testimony, so that the abiding and abounding fruits of the Spirit accompany the direct testimony of the Spirit. And at this point Wesley certainly would not object to "reasoning or argumentation." He would certainly reason, if I have the fruits of the Spirit I may justly conclude that I have the direct witness of the Spirit; and, further, if I have the direct witness of the Spirit to my adoption, I may anticipate and expect the fruits of the Spirit in my heart and life.

Nor does this view taken by Wesley at all militate against the changes of feeling experienced by the penitent and believing soul. Nor does it in any sense exclude the intellectual process by which an intelligent and responsible person concludes that when, to the fullest extent of his light, knowledge, and conviction, he turns from all his sins and believes the Word of God, of the God who can not lie, that then his sins are pardoned, and he is freely justified, and that his peace is made with God.

* * * * *

Chapter 7

THE TESTIMONY OF THE FRUITS

O for a heart to praise my God,

A heart from sin set free!
A heart that always feels thy blood,
So freely spilt for me!

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak
Where Jesus reigns alone.

O for a lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From him that dwells within!

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of love.

-- Charles Wesley

What is our calling's glorious hope,
But inward holiness?
For this to Jesus I look up,
I calmly wait for this.

I wait, till he shall touch me clean,
Shall life and power impart,
Give me the faith that casts out sin,
And purifies the heart.

When Jesus makes my heart his home,
My sin shall all depart;
And, lo! he saith, "I quickly come,"
To fill and rule thy heart.

Be it according to thy word!
Redeem me from all sin:
My heart would now receive thee, Lord;
Come in, my Lord, come in!

-- Charles Wesley

Help, Lord, to whom for help I fly,
And still my tempted soul stand by
Throughout the evil day;
The sacred watchfulness impart,
And keep the issues of my heart,
And stir me up to pray.

In me thine utmost mercy show,
And make me like thyself below,
Unblamable in grace;
Ready prepared and fitted here,
By perfect holiness to appear
Before thy glorious face.

-- Charles Wesley

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. -- Gal. v, 16

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. -- Gal. v, 22-26

For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. -- Eph. v, 8, 9, 10

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. -- John xv, 2

The testimony of fruits is the fourth of the fourfold testimony that the soul has of its conversion and adoption into the heavenly family. These fruits consist of inward experiences and outward actions or manifestations. The hymns and Scripture passages quoted at the head of this chapter will clearly, though but partially, indicate what are the fruits that may reasonably be expected of any one who has really passed from death to life, of one who has indeed become a child of God.

When the work of grace is wrought in any human heart, God will not leave the person upon whom this work is wrought without a witness, and the witness, we may well believe, will be adequate to the needs, sufficient, at least, to remove all ground of doubt. God deals with us as rational and intelligent beings, and so, in addition to the threefold testimony already considered, we have what may be called the logical testimony. It presents itself in this form. If we are really converted and adopted, our inward emotions and experiences, and also our words and actions, will show a decided change. Hence, if we have a standard by which we may try ourselves, we

may come to a logical conclusion concerning our relations to God, and also concerning our spiritual conditions. The quotations already given, and we might add the twelfth chapter of Romans and the Sermon on the Mount, furnish an infallible standard. Now, if in heart and life we realize this standard, if we measure up to it, then we may rationally and logically conclude that we are saved.

Yet all this is no other than rational evidence, the witness of our spirit, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this. Those who have these marks are the children of God. But we have these marks. Therefore we are the children of God. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 87

Although no man on earth can explain the particular manner wherein the Spirit of God works on the soul, yet whosoever has these fruits can not but know and feel that God has wrought them in his heart. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. V, p. 46

Neither is it questioned whether there is an indirect witness, or testimony, that we are the children of God. This is nearly, if not exactly, the same with the testimony of a good conscience towards God; and is the result of reason, or reflection on what we feel in our own souls. Strictly speaking, it is a conclusion drawn partly from the Word of God, and partly from our own experience. The Word of God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; experience, or consciousness, tells me that I have the fruit of the Spirit; and hence I rationally conclude, therefore I am a child of God. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 94

In regard to the direct witness of the Spirit it may be said: It differs from the testimony of the fruit of the Spirit in this, that in the latter there is an inference that we are sons of God, because we see the correspondence between their characteristics as noted in the Bible, and those observed in ourselves. This inference will never be indubitable and satisfactory, much less joyful, unless it be preceded by the direct witness as above defined. Both must go together. The influential or corroborating must always accompany the immediate testimony of the Spirit as a safeguard against deception and fanaticism. While the direct voice must be added to the indirect testimony of the Spirit, which is the attestation of our own consciousness, in order to keep us from sinking into despair or falling into a flattering and fatal mistake. -- D. Steele: "Love Enthroned," pp. 34, 35

But how does it appear that we have these marks? This is a question that still remains. How does it appear that we do love God and our neighbor, and that we keep his commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to ourselves? (not to others). I would ask him, then, who proposes this question -- how does it appear to you that you are alive, and that you are now in ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness, you will know if your soul is alive to God; if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you can but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight in God. By the same means you must be directly assured, if you love your neighbor as yourself, if you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and longsuffering. And with regard to the outward mark of the children of God, which is, according to St John, the keeping his commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you, from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear; if you remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; if you honor your father

and mother; if you do to all as you would they should do to you; if you possess your body in sanctification and honor; and if, whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 87

Q. But how do you know that you are sanctified saved from your inbred corruption?

A. I can know it no otherwise than I know that I am justified. "Hereby know we that we are of God [in either sense], by the Spirit that he hath given us."

We know it by the witness and by the fruit of the Spirit And, first, by the witness. As, when we were justified the Spirit bore witness with our spirit that our sins were forgiven, so when we were sanctified he bore witness that they were taken away. Indeed, the witness of sanctification is not always clear at first (as neither is that of justification); neither is it afterward always the same, but, like that of justification, sometimes stronger and sometimes fainter. Yea, and sometimes it is withdrawn. Yet, in general, the latter testimony of the Spirit is both as clear and as steady as the former. John Wesley: "Plain Account"

Q. When may a person judge himself to have attained this?

A. When, after having been fully convinced of inbred sin by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that which he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to "rejoice evermore," to "pray without ceasing," and "in everything to give thanks." Not that "to feel all love and no sin" is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification.

Q. But whence is it that some imagine they are thus sanctified, when in reality they are not?

A. It is hence: they do not judge by all the preceding marks, but either by part of them or by others that are ambiguous. But I know no instance of a person attending to them all and yet deceived in this matter. I believe there can be none in the world. If a man be deeply and fully convinced, after justification, of inbred sin; if he then experience a gradual mortification of sin, and afterward an entire renewal in the image of God; if to this change, immensely greater than that wrought when he was justified, be added a clear, direct witness of the renewal, I judge it next to impossible this man should be deceived herein. And if one whom I know to be a man of veracity testify these things to me I ought not, without some sufficient reason, to reject his testimony. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

Q. By what "fruit of the Spirit" may we "know that we are of God," even in the highest sense?

A. By love, joy, peace, always abiding; by invariable longsuffering, patience, resignation; by gentleness, triumphing over all provocation; by goodness, mildness, sweetness, tenderness of spirit; by fidelity, simplicity, godly sincerity; by meekness, calmness, evenness of spirit; by

temperance, not only in food and sleep, but in all things natural and spiritual. -- John Wesley:
"Plain Account"

Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, peace, and love, and those not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves; before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have "redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." Yea, there may be of longsuffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God), before we "are accepted in the Beloved," and, consequently, before we have a testimony of our acceptance; but it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise, we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, Abba, Father! This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children. Without this we can not secure a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received the Spirit of Adoption, this "peace which passes all understanding," and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will "keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ." And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of Him that calleth us, to give us always what he has once given; so that there is no need that we should evermore be deprived of either the testimony of God's Spirit, or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 100

The value of absolute certainty in matters of vital importance and far-reaching consequence can not be overestimated. Surely it is a matter of eternal interest to know whether one is indeed a child of God and an heir to a heavenly inheritance. Is it possible for one to know that his sins are all forgiven? Pardon, justification, regeneration, and adoption are the logical and natural steps according to the constitution of man's nature and the Divine order. They are each and all involved in the common Methodist use of the word conversion. May one know that he is truly converted with certainty? Yes.

We have now gone over the grounds upon which knowledge may be based. We have seen, from quotations from our hymns and from the Scriptures and from the works of John Wesley, that such knowledge is possible. Many indeed may not clearly note the steps involved in conversion, but they may still come to the knowledge practically. On the other hand, those who are instructed in the ways of God have placed before them the open path, which following they will assuredly come to know by the fourfold testimony that they are converted and saved. The testimony of personal consciousness; the intellectual testimony; the testimony of the Holy Spirit; the logical testimony, or the testimony of the fruits -- and there is no reason why they should not be conjoined in the experience of intelligent persons when taught from the Scriptures -- and so banish every fear, elucidate all perplexities, and triumph over all doubts. If there be patient continuance in well-doing, combined with unflinching faith, the blessed results so much to be desired will be realized.

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Chapter 8 INBRED SIN AND ITS CURE

O That my load of sin were gone!
O that I could at last submit
At Jesus' feet to lay it down
To lay my soul at Jesus' feet!

Rest for my soul I long to find:
Savior of all, if mine thou art,
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And stamp thine image on my heart.

Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
And fully set my spirit free;
I can not rest till pure within,
Till I am wholly lost in thee.

Fain would I learn of thee, my God,
Thy light and easy burden prove,
The cross all stained with hallowed blood,
The labor of thy dying love.

I would, but thou must give the power;
My heart from every sin release;
Bring near, bring near the joyful hour,
And fill me with thy perfect peace.

-- Charles Wesley

Jesus, a word, a look from thee,
Can turn my heart and make it clean;
Purge out the inbred leprosy,
And save me from my bosom sin.

Lord, if thou wilt, I do believe
Thou canst the saving grace impart;
Thou canst this instant now forgive,
And stamp thine image on my heart.

My heart, which now to thee I raise,
I know thou canst this moment cleanse;
The deepest stains of sin efface,
And drive the evil spirit hence.

Be it according to thy word;
Accomplish now thy work in me;
And let my soul, to health restored,
Devote its deathless powers to thee.

-- Charles Wesley

Now, O my Joshua, bring me in!
Cast out my foes; the inbred sin,
The carnal mind, remove;
The purchase of thy death divide!
And O! with all the sanctified
Give me a lot of love.

-- Charles Wesley

I rest upon thy word;
The promise is for me;
My succor and salvation, Lord,
Shall surely come from thee;
But let me still abide,
Nor from my hope remove,
Till thou my patient spirit guide
Into thy perfect love.

-- Charles Wesley

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. -- Heb. ix, 13, 14

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. -- Heb. iii, 52

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. -- Heb. xii, 12-15

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. -- Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. -- 2 Cor. vii, 1.

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. -- Heb. vi, 1-3

We may well thank God that we live in a world of hope. Clouds and darkness may sometimes seem to enwrap the throne of the just and holy Ruler of the universe, but since the days of the first promise made to fallen man there has been a gleam, a ray of light that has fallen along the path of humanity's weary, wayworn feet. The infinite Father has not left himself without a witness.

It is well to notice, in this immediate connection, the frequency and definiteness with which Charles Wesley, in some of the most helpful hymns he ever wrote, emphasizes the doctrine of "inbred sin," or "original sin," as taught by Methodist theologians, from the first to the last. It is true that writers, even in Methodism, have occasionally appeared who have antagonized this doctrine. There have been a few who have denied its truth and reality, and others who may not have gone quite so far, but have, with more or less vigor, insisted that whatever may properly be understood by these terms has been entirely removed at conversion. Certainly the hymns of Charles Wesley are in perfect accord with all the accredited teachings of Methodism. To illustrate and establish this proposition, one only needs reverently to read the subjoined hymns:

Forgive, and make my nature whole,
My inbred malady remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.

-- Charles Wesley

I want the spirit of power within,
Of love, and of a healthful mind;
Of power to conquer inbred sin;
Of love to thee and all mankind;
Of health, that pain and death defies,
Most vigorous when the body dies.

-- Charles Wesley

Lord, if thou from me hast broke
The power of outward sin,
Burst this Babylonish yoke,
And make me free within:
Bid my inbred sin depart,
And I thy utmost word shall prove,
Upright both in life and heart,
And perfected in love.

-- Charles Wesley

Sin in me, the inbred foe,
Awhile subsists in chains;
But thou all thy power shalt show,
And slay its last remains:
Thou hast conquered my desire,
Thou shalt quench it with thy blood,
Fill me with a purer fire,
And make me all like God.

-- Charles Wesley

Jesus, to thee we look,
Till saved from sin's remains;
Reject the inbred tyrant's yoke,
And cast away his chains.
Our nature shall no more
O'er us dominion have;
By faith we apprehend the power
Which shall forever save!

-- Charles Wesley

O Jesus, at thy feet we wait,
Till thou shalt bid us rise,
Restored to our unsinning state,
To love's sweet paradise.

Savior from sin, we thee receive,
From all indwelling sin;
Thy blood, we steadfastly believe,
Shall make us thoroughly clean.

Since thou wouldst have us free from sin.
And pure as those above,
Make haste to bring thy nature in,
And perfect us in love.

-- Charles Wesley

I right early shall awake,
And see the perfect day;
Soon the Lamb of God shall take
My inbred sin away;
When to me my Lord shall come,

Sin forever shall depart;
Jesus takes up all the room
In a believing heart.

Son of God, arise, arise,
And to thy temple come!
Look, and with thy flaming eyes
The man of sin consume;
Slay him with thy Spirit, Lord;
Reign thou in my heart alone;
Speak the sanctifying word,
And seal me all thine own.

-- Charles Wesley

He wills that I should holy be;
That holiness I long to feel;
That full divine conformity
To all my Savior's righteous will.

No more I stagger at thy power,
Or doubt thy truth, which can not move:
Hasten the long-expected hour,
And bless me with thy perfect love.

Now let thy Spirit bring me in;
And give thy servant to possess
The land of rest from inbred sin,
The land of perfect holiness.

Lord, I believe thy power the same;
The same thy truth and grace endure;
And in thy blessed hands I am,
And trust thee for a perfect cure.

Come, Savior, come, and make me whole;
Entirely all my sins remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.

-- Charles Wesley

It will also be seen that John Wesley in his prose writings is quite as pronounced in his views on this doctrine as Charles Wesley is in his poetry:

In Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God; wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness in which Adam was created ... Hence it is, that being born in sin, we must be born again. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 401

In Adam all die; that is, (1) Our bodies then became mortal; (2) Our souls died; that is, were disunited from God; and hence, (3) We are all born with a sinful, devilish nature; by reason whereof, (4) We are children of wrath, liable to eternal death. "Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. v, 18.) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. ii, 3.) -- Wesley's Works, Vol. V, p. 196

There is constantly manifest in the writings of John Wesley a tendency to magnify the experience of conversion. But this does not mean that he unduly magnifies it. Pardon, justification, and regeneration are not counted by him of small importance. His example in this respect ought to be followed, not only by those who are numbered among his disciples, but by all evangelical Christians. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to overestimate the scope and significance of the work and results involved in the conversion of a sinner. No one can state the case more clearly, and possibly no stronger, than Wesley. He says, "At the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins." And it may well be noted that he does not say that the person is entirely sanctified, but that sanctification begins. Then he goes on to say:

In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit; there is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the love of God shed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind into the mind that was in Christ Jesus. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 385

Well might one almost suppose that such an experience as this would leave nothing further that needed to be wrought in a soul thus gloriously saved. But Wesley in the very next paragraph goes on to say:

How naturally do those who experience such a change, imagine that all sin is gone; that it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein! How easily do they draw that inference, I feel no sin, therefore I have none; it does not stir, therefore it does not exist; it has no motion, therefore it has no being! But it is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return, and sin revives, showing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves plainly contrary to each other; the flesh lusting against the spirit, nature opposing the grace of God. They can not deny that, although they still feel power to believe in Christ, and to love God; and although his Spirit [still] witnesses with their spirits that they are the children of God; yet they feel in themselves sometimes pride or

self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently stirring in their heart, though not conquering; yea, perhaps, thrusting sore at them that they may fall; but the Lord is their help. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 385

Again observe he still further says:

The question is not concerning outward sin; whether a child of God commit sin or no. We all agree and earnestly maintain, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." We agree, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." Neither do we now inquire whether inward sin will always remain in the children of God; whether sin will continue in the soul as long as it continues in the body; nor yet do we inquire whether a justified person may relapse either into inward or outward sin; but simply this: Is a justified or regenerate man freed from all sin as soon as he is justified? Is there, then, no sin in his heart? -- nor ever after, unless he fall from grace? -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 109

And he continues:

I can not, therefore, by any means, receive this assertion, that there is no sin in a believer from the moment he is justified; first, because it is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture; secondly, because it is contrary to the experience of the children of God; thirdly, because it is absolutely new, never heard of in the world till yesterday; and, lastly, because it is naturally attended with the most fatal consequence, not only grieving those whom God hath not grieved, but perhaps dragging them into everlasting perdition.-- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, pp. 110, 111

Undoubtedly in this last quotation Wesley refers to involuntary transgressions. The sin that he finds in believers is not the violation of known law in the intelligent exercise of free will. It will be well if we let Wesley explain himself as he does in the following quotations. He says:

By sin, I here understand outward sin, according to the plain, common acceptance of the word; an actual, voluntary transgression of the law; of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such at the time that it is transgressed. But, "whosoever is born of God," while he abides in faith and love, and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only doth not, but can not thus commit sin. So long as he thus believeth in God through Christ and loves him, and is pouring out his heart before him, he can not voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God hath forbidden; so long that seed which remaineth in him, that loving, praying, thankful faith, compels him to refrain from whatsoever he knows to be an abomination in the sight of God." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. VI, p. 164

He that is by faith born of God sinneth not; (1) By any habitual sin, for all habitual sin is reigning, but sin can not reign in any that believeth; nor (2) By any willful sin, for his will while he abideth in that faith is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison; nor (3) By any sinful desire, for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God, and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stiflenth in the birth; nor (4) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought, for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will, and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin." And though he can not say he hath not sinned, yet now he sinneth not. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 16

But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or born of God (an expression taken also in divers senses) as, first, not to commit sin ... Now, the Word of God plainly declares that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, do not continue in sin; that they can not "live any longer therein" (Rom. iv; 1, 2); that they are "planted together in the likeness of the death" of Christ (verse 5) that their "old man is crucified with him," the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin; that being dead with Christ, they are free from sin (verses 6 and 7); that they are "dead unto sin and alive unto God" (verse ii); that "sin hath no more dominion over them, who are not under the law, but under grace;" but that these, "being free from sin," are become the servants of righteousness (verses 14 and 18) -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 359

It has been observed before, that the opposite doctrine, that there is no sin in believers, is quite new in the Church of Christ; that it was never heard of for seventeen hundred years; never till it was discovered by Count Zinzendorf. I do not remember to have seen the least intimation of it, either in any ancient or modern writer; unless perhaps in some of the wild, ranting Antinomians. And these likewise say and unsay, acknowledging there is sin in their flesh, although no sin in the heart. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 111

Two things are manifest from these quotations. The first is, that a justified and regenerated soul does not commit willful violations of the known law of God; and hence it may be said of all such that they continue in a justified state, and enjoy the witness of the Spirit, that they are indeed the children of God and joint heirs with Christ to a heavenly inheritance. At the same time it is equally clear, from Wesley's teachings and the hymns quoted at the beginning of this chapter, and also from the Scripture passages adduced, that there are evidences and manifestations of a condition of the inner life that needs an additional and special manifestation of the grace of God. This condition is recognized by a great variety of names and terms. It is well to know these various names and terms, which, while they practically mean the same thing, yet each one may possibly contain some variant shadow of meaning.

The "seed of sin" implies that there is still remaining in the heart of the convert some germ that may develop life. It is said that wheat three thousand years old, taken from the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy, was found to possess life, and under proper conditions speedily germinated and grew. The long-buried "seed of sin" may show signs of life. The "roots of bitterness," of which it may be said, "though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant," -- these "roots of bitterness" are only safe when they are plucked out of the human heart, and are consigned to a triple death.

The "carnal mind" is the mind that is dominated to a greater or less degree, by the lusts of the eye, and the unholy ambitions of life, and the incitements of the senses. It needs to be changed for the mind that is in Christ Jesus. The "indwelling sin" is the sin that inheres in the regenerated soul, and is a constant menace to the work of grace. It is a foe in ambush. It surprises and sometimes overpowers the convert. The "inbred sin" is the taint of heredity that establishes the fact that we come of a corrupt ancestry. The sin is in bone, and brawn, and brain. It demands a renewing of the nature, a real recreation. The "original sin" is not a voluntary transgression, but the

fallen condition in which we find ourselves at the very outset of our earthly career. It is a condition for which we are not responsible, yet it would be ruinous but for the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The "depravity" is not total, for no one is as bad in his present condition as he might be, or as he may be in the future; but the depravity is universal. All are gone astray; all come short of the glory of God; all are earthly and sensual by nature; all are defiled in the innermost depths of their being.

The "birth sin:" We may trace our family lineage along any line we please, and we shall find that all who have gone before us were born into the world of a sinful parentage. All have had evil hearts of unbelief. Adam and Eve were the only sinless pair among all our progenitors, and we are the descendants, not of the sinless, but the fallen and sinful.

It is altogether a worthless expenditure of time to quarrel with these words and terms that express a known and well-established condition of the human race and of human hearts. It is easy to raise objections, and discuss definitions, and quibble about non-essentials, when all the time it is perfectly evident that the difficulty and the disease indicated are deplorable realities. The all-important question is, Has a full, sufficient, and complete remedy been provided?

There can be no reasonable doubt that the abounding grace of God has made ample provision to remedy the ruin incident to the fall. It only needs that the simple and reasonable conditions of the Gospel should be embraced in order that the remedy may be effectually applied.

* * * * *

Chapter 9

THE BLESSING ATTAINED, GRADUALLY OR INSTANTANEOUSLY, WHICH?

Savior, to thee my soul looks up,
My present Savior thou!
In all the confidence of hope,
I claim the blessing now.

'Tis done! thou dost this moment save,
With full salvation bless;
Redemption through thy blood I have,
And spotless love and peace.

-- Charles Wesley

O come, and dwell in me,
Spirit of power within,
And bring the glorious liberty
From sorrow, fear, and sin.

The seed of sin's disease,
Spirit of health, remove,
Spirit of finished holiness,
Spirit of perfect love.

Hasten the joyful day
Which shall my sins consume;
When old things shall be done away,
And all things new become.

-- Charles Wesley

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. -- Deut. xxx, 11-14

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. -- Isa. lxxv, 24

The question has often arisen and as often been discussed as to whether the experience of perfect love, or sanctification, is gradually or instantaneously attained. Undoubtedly the same principles will apply here as in the case of the sinner's conversion. Some souls are under conviction for their sins for years. They are enlightened by the Spirit, and know the way of duty, and feel the burden of sin, and have desires for deliverance, and they seek to amend their lives and succeed in this to some extent, and they perform many religious duties and observe many of the Divine requirements; but they do not turn to God in genuine repentance; they do not forsake their sins; they fondly cling to some heart-idol; they refuse to consecrate themselves to God's service; they do not renounce absolutely every other hope and refuge, and by faith take Christ as their present and all-sufficient Savior. It seems, to those who observe them and are interested in them, that they are almost Christians, and possibly becoming more so year by year until at last they take the decisive step, and instantly they are converted and saved. It may therefore be said that, in a sense, their conversion has been gradual, while really it has been instantaneous; for it is the work of a moment for God to pardon, justify, and regenerate the soul.

The converted soul does not come at once into all the fullness of the blessing of the gospel. It was a great thing for the Hebrew people to pass from under the galling yoke of Egyptian slavery, to behold a way of escape opened for them through the broad waters of the Red Sea, while those waters stood like walls of solid crystal as they passed onward to the farther shore. But the wilderness was before them, with its forty years of almost aimless wanderings. True, they might have gone straight up to Canaan, and in a very few days have entered the promised land. It was not for any lack or fault on the part of God. The difficulties were mostly, if not all, of their own making. If they had only trusted and obeyed God; if they had believed Joshua and Caleb; if they had possessed a worthy courage, Moses yes, Moses, would have himself led them into the inheritance of their fathers', and established them in its possession.

So it too often is with the convert. Great things are in store for him. He has escaped from the bondage of Satan; an effectual door of hope has been thrown wide open before him; he has passed out into liberty, but he does not enter at once into the enjoyment of the riches of the grace of God; he does not find his spiritual Canaan. What he might do he fails to do, and, instead of a short and direct passage, he yields to various temptations. He may, perchance, look with regret upon some of the things he has sacrificed for the sake of Christ; he may not be willing to follow his Leader in all things; he hesitates and doubts and fears; he believes in the evil reports of faint-hearted spies; and so, it may be, he wanders in the wilderness for many weary years.

In the meantime he ought rather to breathe the prayer of the poet, and press on to victory:

Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all thy people known;
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And thou art loved alone:
A rest where all our soul's desire
Is fixed on things above;
Where fear, and sin, and grief expire,
Cast out by perfect love,
O that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in!
Now, Savior, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin.

-- Charles Wesley

O God, what offering shall I give
To thee, the Lord of earth and skies?
My spirit, soul, and flesh receive,
A holy, living sacrifice:
Small as it is, 'tis all my store;
More shouldst thou have, if I had more.

Now, then, my God, thou hast my soul;
No longer mine, but thine I am:
Guard thou thine own, possess it whole;
Cheer it with hope, with love inflame.
Thou hast my spirit; there display
Thy glory to the perfect day.

Thou hast my flesh, thy hallowed shrine,
Devoted solely to thy will;
Here let thy light forever shine;
This house still let thy presence fill;
O source of life! live, dwell, and move

In me, till all my life be love!

-- Charles Wesley

Is there a thing than life more dear?
A thing from which we can not part?
We can; we now rejoice to tear
The idol from our bleeding heart.

Jesus, accept our sacrifice;
All things for thee we count but loss;
Lo! at thy word our idol dies,
Dies on the altar of thy cross.

-- Charles Wesley

Lord, in the strength of grace,
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to thee.

Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to thee thy own;
And from this moment live or die
To serve my God alone.

-- Charles Wesley

No sincere soul seeking the full salvation of the Gospel can prayerfully and with real soul-hunger read these hymns of Charles Wesley without being wonderfully helped; and it would not be at all surprising if, while reading them, the blessed experience should be realized.

As we might naturally suppose would be the case, the views of John Wesley are quite as pronounced as those of his brother on this particular point. The question is not concerning growth after the experience of perfect love has been reached. Growth in spiritual things will continue. The soul that is made holy will grow in capacity for service and enjoyment and knowledge to all eternity. The progress is from glory to glory in an environment that will be most helpful. Why, then, doubt the possibility of entering into the experience of perfect love in this life, and then continuing to grow in the knowledge and love of God for unending ages? And why doubt the possibility of attaining this experience instantaneously? Why not accept the teachings of John Wesley, a greater than whom in regard to this subject has not lived since the days of Paul and the apostles. Hear him!

The whole comes to one point: Is there, or is there not, any instantaneous sanctification between justification and death? I say yes. -- John Wesley --

If you press all believers to go on to perfection, and to expect deliverance from sin every moment, they will grow in grace. But if ever they lose that expectation they will grow flat and cold. -- John Wesley --

Why should you be without the blessing any longer? It is His will that, from the time you read this, you should never sin against him any more. Thou needst but one grain of faith, and the mountain shall be removed. -- John Wesley --

Q. But is not this the case of all that are justified? Do they not gradually die to sin and grow in grace, till at, or perhaps a little before, death God perfects them in love?

A. I believe this is the case of most, but not all. God usually gives a considerable time for men to receive light, to grow in grace, to do and suffer his will, before they are either justified or sanctified. But he does not invariably adhere to this. Sometimes he cuts short his work. He does the work of many years in a few weeks; perhaps in a week, a day, an hour. He justifies, or sanctifies, both those who have done or suffered nothing, and who have not had time for a gradual growth, either in light or grace. And may he not do what he will with his own? Is thine eye evil, because he is good?

It need not, therefore, be affirmed over and over, and proved by forty texts of Scripture, either that most men are perfect in love at last -- that there is a gradual work of God in the soul -- or that, generally speaking, it is a long time, even many years, before sin is destroyed. All this we know. But we know, likewise, that God may, with man's good leave, cut short his work, in whatever degree he pleases, and do the usual work of many years in a moment. He does so in many instances. And yet there is a gradual work both before and after that moment. So that one may affirm the work is gradual; another, it is instantaneous; without any manner of contradiction. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

With God, one day is as a thousand years. It plainly follows that the quantity of time is nothing to him. Centuries, years, months, days, hours, and moments are exactly the same. Consequently, he can as well sanctify in a day after we are justified as a hundred years. There is no difference at all, unless we suppose him to be such a one as ourselves. Accordingly we see, in fact, that some of the most unquestionable witnesses of sanctifying grace were sanctified within a few days after they were justified. O, why do not we encourage all to expect this blessing every hour from the moment they are justified? -- Wesley's Works, Vol. IV, p. 451

Q. Is this death to sin and renewal in love gradual or instantaneous?

A. A man may be dying for some time, yet he does not, properly speaking, die till the instant the soul is separated from the body; and in that instant he lives the life of eternity. In like manner he may be dying to sin for some time, yet he is not dead to sin until sin is separated from his soul: and in that instant he lives the full life of love. And as the change undergone when the body dies is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any we had known before, yea, such as till then it is impossible to conceive; so the change wrought when the soul dies to sin is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any before, and than any can conceive till he experiences

it. Yet he still grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God, and will do so, not only till death, but probably to all eternity.

Q. How are we to wait for this change?

A. Not in careless indifference or indolent inactivity, but in vigorous universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily, as well as in earnest prayer and fasting and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure), he deceiveth his own soul. It is true, we receive it by simple faith. But God does not, will not, give that faith unless we seek it with all diligence in the way which he hath ordained.

This consideration may satisfy those who inquire why so few have received the blessing. Inquire how many are seeking it in this way, and you have a sufficient answer.

Prayer especially is wanting. Who continues instant therein? Who wrestles with God for this very thing? So "ye have not because ye ask not," or because "ye ask amiss;" namely, "that you may be renewed before you die." Before you die! Will that content you? Nay, but ask that it may be done now, today, while it is called today! Do not call this "setting God a time." Certainly today is his time, as well as tomorrow. Make haste, man-make haste! Let

"Thy soul break out in strong desire
The perfect bliss to prove!
Thy longing heart be all on fire,
To be dissolved in love!"

-- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

Certainly sanctification (in the proper sense) is "an instantaneous deliverance from all sin," and includes "an instantaneous power then given, always to cleave to God." Yet this sanctification (at least, in the lower degrees) does not include a power never to think a useless thought, nor ever speak a useless word. I, myself, believe that such a perfection is inconsistent with living in a corruptible body: for this makes it impossible "always to think right." While we breathe, we shall, more or less, mistake. If, therefore, Christian perfection implies this, we must not expect it till after death. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 718

Every one, though born of God in an instant -- yea, and sanctified in an instant -- yet undoubtedly grows by slow degrees, both after the former and the latter change. But it does not follow from thence that there must be a considerable tract of time between the one and the other. A year or a month is the same with God as a thousand. If he wills, to do is present with him; much less is there any necessity for much suffering. God can do his work by pleasure as well as by pain. It is therefore, undoubtedly our duty to pray and look for salvation every day, every hour, every moment, without waiting till we have either done or suffered more. Why should not this be the accepted time? -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. VI, p. 764

After meeting the Society, I talked with a sensible woman, whose experience seemed peculiar. She said: "A few days before Easter last I was deeply convinced of sin; and in Easter week I knew that my sins were forgiven, and was filled with 'joy and peace in believing.' But in about eighteen days I was convinced, in a dream, of the necessity of a higher salvation; and I mourned day and night, in agony of desire, to be thoroughly sanctified, till, on the twenty-third day after my justification, I found a total change, together with a clear witness that the blood of Jesus had cleansed me from all unrighteousness." -- Wesley's Journal, June 23, 1761

"But does God work this great work in the soul gradually or instantaneously?" Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some; I mean in this sense, they do not advert to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin "by the breath of his mouth," "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And so he generally does; a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudiced person. Thou, therefore, look for it every moment! Look for it in the way above described; in all those good works whereunto thou art "created anew in Christ Jesus." There is no danger; you can be no worse, if you are no better, for that expectation. For were you to be disappointed of your hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall not be disappointed of your hope; it will come, and will not tarry." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, pp. 390, 391

Can the reader at this point give any good and sufficient reason why the blessing may not this very moment be received? It can not be purchased with silver and gold; all precious gems of earth and ocean can not buy it; neither can it be gained by long days of toil and self-denial; sleepless vigils will not avail; good works, though all one's goods should be given to the poor, and one's body should be given to be burned, will not suffice; nor will fasting, and tears, and forms of prayer, bring the blessing. The way is open the conditions are easy; a child may comply with them. Why not, then, believe and enter into rest?

* * * * *

Chapter 10

THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING, HOW OBTAINED? ENLIGHTENMENT, CONVICTION OF NEED, LOYALTY

I wait thy will to do,
As angels do in heaven;
In Christ a creature new,
Most graciously forgiven;
I wait thy perfect will to prove,
All sanctified by spotless love.

-- Charles Wesley

Me with that restless thirst inspire,
That sacred, infinite desire,
And feast my hungry heart;
Less than thyself can not suffice;

My soul for all thy fullness cries,
For all thou hast and art.

Jesus, thy crowning grace impart;
Bless me with purity of heart,
That, now beholding thee,
I soon may view thy open face,
On all thy glorious beauties gaze,
And God forever see.

-- Charles Wesley

My soul breaks out in strong desire
The perfect bliss to prove;
My longing heart is all on fire
To be dissolved in love.

Give me thyself; from every boast,
From every wish set free;
Let all I am in thee be lost;
But give thyself to me.

Thy gifts, alas! can not suffice,
Unless thyself be given;
Thy presence makes my paradise,
And where thou art is heaven.

-- Charles Wesley

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. -- I Thess. V, 23

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. -- I John iii,
3

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. -- Col. i, 12, 13

The soul must not rest in supine indifference while waiting for the blessing of full salvation. Without the slightest doubt we may believe that in due time, the Holy Spirit will so enlighten the mind that there will come with the enlightenment a sense of need. It will be clearly revealed to the believer that there are heights and depths, lengths and breadths of Christian experience to which he has never advanced; that there are riches of grace he has never known; that there are possibilities of cleansing, enduement, and victory that he has never experienced. With

this enlightenment there will be the conviction, more or less clear and strong, that something must be attempted on the part of the believer. He hears the faithful exhortation of Paul:

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. -- Phil. ii, 12, 13

And let it be clearly understood that the blessing sought is not pardon; it is not justification; "it is not regeneration; it is not recovery from backsliding; it is not simply a great blessing; it is not growth in grace; it is a distinct work of God, an experience, a life; it is an instantaneous blessing, obtained by faith, and witnessed by the Holy Ghost."

It must also be understood that no impossible thing is required of any soul. The very weakest child of God may comply with all the conditions, and be and do whatever is essential. Many a diffident, self-distrustful person has failed to secure the riches of grace that are freely offered, simply because a sense of unworthiness has discouraged faith and hindered effort. All such persons need instruction and encouragement, and it would be especially helpful for them to familiarize themselves with the great and exceedingly precious promises found in the Scriptures which completely cover all their needs. The Divine promises constitute the broadest and firmest foundation for faith.

Every believer enlightened, and convicted of need by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, ought to count over his mercies and estimate them at their real value, so far as he may be able. Then he ought to cultivate a thankful frame of mind. Gratitude for past mercies shows that they are appreciated. It is a great and wonderful experience to be a pardoned, justified, regenerated, and adopted believer. Too low an estimate is often put on this blessed and glorious experience. Surely any one may well say:

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view,
I'm lost in wonder, love, and praise.

O how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare,
That glows within my ravished heart?
But thou canst read it there.

Through all eternity to thee
A grateful song I'll raise;
But O, eternity's too short
To utter all thy praise."

-- Addison

Christians are often too little thankful for what they have received. There ought to be a constant doxology in the soul of every saved sinner; and this spirit of gratitude and praise, of appreciation and thanksgiving, puts one in such relation to the Giver of all good, there will develop a well-grounded hope for richer and more abundant blessings.

But the question may be asked, Can we possibly continue in this attitude while deeply convicted of need?

Certainly we may; for the kingdom of God is not divided against itself; therefore, let not believers be discouraged from "rejoicing in the Lord always." And yet we may be sensibly pained at the sinful nature that still remains in us. It is good for us to have a piercing sense of this, and a vehement desire to be delivered from it. But this should only incite us the more zealously to fly every moment to our strong Helper, the more earnestly to "press forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." And when the sense of our sins most abounds, the sense of his love should much more abound. -- Wesley's "Plain Account"

O joyful sound of gospel grace!
Christ shall in me appear;
I, even I, shall see his face;
I shall be holy here.

Come, O my God, thyself reveal,
Fill all this mighty void;
Thou only canst my spirit fill:
Come, O my God, my God!

Fulfill, fulfill my large desires,
Large as infinity;
Give, give me all my soul requires,
All, all that is in thee.

-- Charles Wesley

Again, it is absolutely essential that the soul seeking the fullness of the blessing of the gospel should be utterly loyal to God. The smallest "wedge of gold," the most worthless rag of any "Babylonish garment," kept and hidden away for any purpose whatever, will prevent any progress. No advancement can be made in the Christian life unless there be present constantly this spirit of glad and willing obedience. We must live up to the light we have, and be completely in harmony with the Divine will, so that we can say "Amen" to God whatever he may command. This spirit of loyal obedience brings us very near to God. When we have it, then he knows we can be trusted with the richest gifts of his love.

Sometimes it happens that the penitent sinner attempts to make terms with the Almighty. A good, moral life, generous giving to support the means of grace, especially the public worship of the sanctuary, kindness to the suffering poor, strict honesty, and an orthodox faith may be suggested as a basis upon which God may pardon and save; but all such ideas are vain; for sinners there is

only one refuge, only one ground upon which pardon can be granted, and that is found in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and is never made available to the penitent except as he makes a full surrender.

The same principle will apply to the believer as to the penitent. There must be an unequivocal surrender. Nor gold, nor position, nor good works, nor faithful service, can avail. At every step there must be a sincere and heartfelt yes to every requirement of God. The enlightened soul convicted of need must steadfastly wait in this attitude of unquestioning loyalty!

* * * * *

Chapter 11

THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING, HOW OBTAINED? -- DEVOTEMENT -- CONSECRATION -- FAITH

O glorious hope of perfect love!
It lifts me up to things above;
It bears on eagles' wings;
It gives my ravished soul a taste,
And makes me for some moments feast
With Jesus, priests and kings.

Rejoicing now in earnest hope,
I stand, and from the mountain-top
See all the land below:
Rivers of milk and honey rise,
And all the fruits of paradise
In endless plenty grow.

A land of corn, and wine, and oil,
Favored with God's peculiar smile,
With every blessing blest;
There dwells the Lord our Righteousness,
And keeps his own in perfect peace,
And everlasting rest.

O that I might at once go up;
No more on this side Jordan stop,
But now the land possess;
This moment end my legal years,
Sorrows sins, and doubts and fears,
A howling wilderness!

-- Charles Wesley

Answer that gracious end in me,

For which thy precious life was given;
Redeem from all iniquity;
Restore and make me meet for heaven!
Unless thou purge my every stain,
Thy suffering and my faith are vain.

Didst thou not in the flesh appear,
Sin to condemn, and man to save?
That perfect love might cast out fear?
That I thy mind in me might have?
In holiness show forth thy praise,
And serve thee all my spotless days?

-- Charles Wesley

Prisoners of hope, lift up your heads!
The day of liberty draws near;
Jesus, who on the serpent treads,
Shall soon in your behalf appear:
The Lord will to his temple come;
Prepare your hearts to make him room.

You all shall find, whom in his word
Himself hath caused to put your trust,
The Father of our dying Lord
Is ever to his promise just;
Faithful, if we our sins confess,
To cleanse from all unrighteousness.

-- Charles Wesley

Father, I dare believe
Thee merciful and true:
Thou wilt my guilty soul forgive,
My fallen soul renew.
Come, then, for Jesus' sake,
And bid my heart be clean;
An end of all my troubles make,
An end of all my sin.

I will, through grace, I will,
I do return to thee;
Take, empty it, O Lord, and fill
My heart with purity!
For power I feebly pray:
Thy kingdom now restore,

Today, while it is called today,
And I shall sin no more.

I can not wash my heart,
But by believing thee,
And waiting for thy blood to impart
The spotless purity:
While at thy cross I lie,
Jesus, thy grace bestow.
Now thy all-cleansing blood apply
And I am white as snow.

-- Charles Wesley

But is it possible that I
Should live and sin no more?
Lord, if on thee I dare rely,
The faith shall bring the power.

On me that faith divine bestow,
Which doth the mountain move;
And all my spotless life shall show
The Omnipotence of love.

-- Charles Wesley

Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? -- Chron. xxix, 5

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. -- Rom. xii, 1, 2

There are two very important words which are frequently employed deserving the consideration of all who would seek the fullness of the blessing. The words are devotement and consecration. The latter is the more comprehensive, and means giving up and giving to. When the soldier enlists in the service of his country he consecrates himself to that service. But in doing so it is clearly apparent that he, first of all, gives up many things that may be very dear to him. To say nothing of the quiet security and comfort of the life of a citizen which he certainly must forego, he must also abandon his business, his hope of attaining wealth; he must say farewell to his friends; he must, if a husband and father, part with wife and children. All this is involved in the idea of consecration. But beyond this he must surrender his own will to that of another; he must employ all his powers of body and mind to execute the orders given him; he must accept hardship, and face danger, and, if need be, die for his country. All this is involved in the consecration he has made.

In much the same way the one seeking for full salvation must devote himself, must consecrate himself to the service of God. Not that he has been unconsecrated in his justified state; but, following the enlightenment of the Spirit and the conviction of need, there must be a revision and renewal of personal consecration. This will mean the consecration of all we have and all we may hope for in the future. All is given to God. All we know, and all we do not know, are his. There is no reservation in thought, or word, or deed. It is free, glad, complete, irrevocable; and the language not of the lips only but of the heart will be:

If so poor a worm as I
May to thy great glory live,
All my actions sanctify,
All my words and thoughts receive;
Claim me for thy service, claim
All I have, and all I am.

Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory, mind, and will;
All my goods, and all my hours;
All I know and all I feel;
All I think, or speak, or do;
Take my heart, but make it new.

Now, O God, thine own I am,
Now I give thee back thine own;
Freedom, friends, and health, and fame,
Consecrate to thee alone:
Thine I live, thrice happy I;
Happier still if thine I die.

-- Charles Wesley

Certainly, there must be a giving up of all that is wrong; not to do this would be disloyalty. There must be the abandonment of all that is doubtful; not to do this would be to tempt the tempter. We can not be worldlings, and at the same time expect the fullness of the blessing. We can not serve two masters; we can not serve God and mammon. There is a line of demarcation that separates the world from the people of God. Worldly people may, through education and association and the prayers of the saints and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, come very near the line; while some Christians, yielding to worldly influences and declining in their religious life, may come very near the line, so that there seems to be but very little difference observable between some Christians and some worldly people. What every real follower of Jesus should strive after is to keep as far away from the dividing line as possible; keep as far as possible on the heaven side of every question. "He that is not with me is against me," is the eternal protest of the Son of God against worldliness and frivolity. The soul that would meet with the highest success in the Christian life must not indulge in the follies of the age in which he lives. There is not an honest and well-instructed professor of religion that does not know that indulgence in these things is altogether incompatible with the reasonable hope of realizing the highest attainments in the life of

faith. The aspiring soul must lay aside, not only the "besetting sins," but all sorts of weights and clogs and fetters that can in any way hinder in the laudable effort to rise to the most exalted plane of holy living. Why not give heed to the words to the Apostle Paul:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. -- 2 Cor. vi, 14-18

There must be a separation from the world; the consecration that is made must be made with the full consent of the affections and the will. Self-sacrifice, self-denial, self-abnegation, must be uttermost. There must be but one thought, and that the devotement of all that we ever call my or mine to the service of God and humanity.

When all this is done we may take constant and ever-increasing comfort in the assurance that nothing will be required but what will be for the best good of humanity, for our own supremest advantage, and for God's greatest glory. Why, then, should not the consecration be instantly made?

Would aught on earth my wishes share?
Though dear as life the idol be,
The idol from my breast I tear,
Resolved to seek my all in thee.

Whate'er I fondly counted mine,
To thee, my Lord, I here restore;
Gladly I all for thee resign;
Give me thyself, I ask no more.

-- Charles Wesley

We must never lose sight of the fact that consecration is not so much a matter of emotion and feeling as it is of intellect and will. Let the sensibilities of one's nature have full play, but be careful that the intellect takes a careful survey of all that is involved, and when duty and privilege alike require a complete consecration, then the supreme faculty, that enables us to settle all moral questions intelligently, and in the fear of God, comes into play, and knowing what we ought to do, the will decides and the work is done.

Is there a thing beneath the sun,
That strives with thee my heart to share?
Ah, tear it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there;
Then shall my heart from earth be free,

When it hath found repose in thee.

O hide this self from me, that I
No more, but Christ in me, may live;
My vile affections crucify,
Nor let one darling lust survive!
In all things nothing may I see,
Nothing desire or seek but thee.

-- Tr. by John Wesley

Faith is essential in every effort to rise in the Divine life. No promise found in the Bible will avail unless it is claimed by faith. Appropriating faith can only be exercised when the conditions connected with the promise have been met. The experience of conversion came as the result of faith. In seeking for the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel, the exercise of faith is the last act of the soul that hungers and thirsts for all that God has to grant. Well may we turn to John Wesley, whose teachings are adapted to the needs of the present day as perfectly as they were to those of the times in which he lived. Would that all Christian people were more familiar with his teachings! Surely it will be profitable carefully to ponder the quotations that are here subjoined:

To Miss Ritchie, 1782:

That point, entire salvation from inbred sin, can hardly ever be insisted upon, either in preaching or prayer, without a particular blessing. Honest Isaac Brown firmly believes this doctrine that we are to be saved from all sin in this life. But I wish when opportunity serves, you would encourage him 1. To preach Christian perfection constantly strongly and explicitly; 2. Explicitly to assert and prove that it may be received now; and 3 (which indeed is implied therein) That it is to be received by simple faith. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 181

Inquiring (in 1761) how it was that in all these parts we have so few witnesses of full salvation, I constantly receive one and the same answer: "We see now we sought it by our works; we thought it was to come gradually; we never expected it to come in a moment, by simple faith, in the very same manner as we received justification." What wonder is it, then, that you have been fighting all these years as one that beateth the air. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 377

By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard-seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love of God and man. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 236

I have continually testified (for these five-and-twenty years) in private and public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And, indeed, the one of those great truths does

exceedingly illustrate the other. EXACTLY AS WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, SO ARE WE SANCTIFIED BY FAITH. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. I, p. 338

Many years since, I saw that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. I began by following after it, and inciting all with whom I had any intercourse to do the same. Ten years after, God gave me a clearer view than I had before of the way to attain it; namely, by faith in the Son of God. And immediately I declared to all, "We are saved from sin, we are made holy by faith." This I testified in private, in public, in print, and God confirmed it by a thousand witnesses. -- Wesley's Journal, Vol. VII, p. 38

What salvation is it, which is through this faith?

1. And first, whatever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not ye shall be (though that also is true), but ye are saved through faith.

2. Ye are saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought his first-begotten into the world: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And neither here, nor in other parts of the Holy Writ, is there any limitation or restriction, All his people, or as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in him," he will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin "of the flesh and of the spirit." Through faith that is in him they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 15

As to manner, I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently in an instant ... Look for it every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour -- this moment? Certainly you may look for it now, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done first before you are sanctified. You think I must be or do thus or thus. Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith you expect it as you are and if, as you are, then expect it now. It is important to observe that there is an inseparable connection between these three points -- expect it by faith, expect it as you are, and expect it now. TO DENY ONE IS TO DENY THEM ALL. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 391

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whom God hath given to be the propitiation for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved, first from the guilt of sin, having redemption through his blood; then from the power, which shall have no more dominion over thee; and then from the root of it, into the whole image of God." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 405

Sanctification, too, "is not of works, lest any man should boast." "It is the gift of God," and is to be received by plain, simple faith. Suppose you are now laboring to "abstain from all appearance of evil," "zealous of good works," and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is then only one point remaining: the voice of God to your soul is, "Believe, and be saved." First, believe that God has promised to save you from all sin, and to fill

you with all holiness; secondly, believe that he is able thus "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him;" thirdly, believe that he is willing, as well as able, to save you to the uttermost; to purify you from all sin, and fill up all your heart with love. Believe, fourthly, that he is not only able, but willing to do it now! Not when you come to die; not at any distant time; not tomorrow, but today. He will then enable you to believe, it is done, according to his Word: and then "patience shall have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 224

But what is that faith whereby we are sanctified? saved from sin, and perfected in love? It is a Divine evidence and conviction, first, that God hath promised it in the Holy Scripture. Till we are thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step farther.

It is a Divine evidence and conviction, secondly, that what God hath promised he is able to perform. Admitting, therefore, that "with men it is impossible" to "bring a clean thing out of an unclean," to purify the heart from all sin, and to fill it with all holiness; yet this creates no difficulty in the case, seeing "with God all things are possible."

It is, thirdly, a Divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a moment to him the same as a thousand years? He can not want more time to accomplish whatever is his will. And he can not want or stay for any more worthiness or fitness in the persons he is pleased to honor. We may, therefore, boldly say, at any one point of time, "Now is the day of salvation!" "Today, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." "Behold, all things are now ready, come unto the marriage!"

To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us now, there needs to be added one thing more, a Divine evidence and conviction that he doeth it. In that hour it is done, God says to the inmost soul, "According to thy faith be it unto thee!" Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; it is clean "from all unrighteousness." The believer then experiences the deep meaning of those solemn words, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, p. 390

All things are possible to him
That can in Jesus' name believe:
Lord, I no more thy truth blaspheme,
Thy truth I lovingly receive;
I can, I do believe in thee;
All things are possible to me.

The most impossible of all
Is, that I e'er from sin should cease;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall;
Jesus, look to thy faithfulness!
If nothing is too hard for thee,
All things are possible to me.

Though earth and hell the word gainsay,
The word of God can never fail;
The Lamb shall take my sins away;
'Tis certain, though impossible:
The thing impossible shall be;
All things are possible to me.

-- Charles Wesley

While thus looking for the blessing of full salvation, let no one mark out the way in which God shall reveal himself as the One who hears and answers prayer. It may be that it is necessary to try one's faith, and so the answer to prayer does not instantly come, but let no one despair. Hold on to the promise, and let God do as he will. He knows best what is most helpful to those who seek his grace. Jesus sometimes delayed his answer to the prayers made to him for help. And sometimes his way was not the way the human mind had marked out for him. The God who knows us far better than we know ourselves will make no mistake. When we have done our part, and complied with all the conditions, then all we have to do is to wait and rest until we feel and know that the Everlasting Arms are underneath us, and the eternal God is our refuge, and the cleansing blood and the baptism of fire have come upon us, and we have found the uttermost salvation. But we must never forget that our prayers should be addressed to the Father in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus says:

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth. -- John xiv, 13-17

So, we may take some specific promise, some promise to which our hearts turn, some promise that covers all our needs, and then claim its fulfillment in the name of our ascended Lord and Advocate, and the work will be done for us and in us that will cleanse, and inspire, and endue with power from on high.

* * * * *

Chapter 12

DOES THE BLESSING INVOLVE SINLESSNESS?

But is it possible that I
Should live and sin no more?
Lord, if on thee I dare rely,
The faith shall bring the power.

On me the faith divine bestow
Which doth the mountain move;
And all my spotless life shall show
The omnipotence of love.

-- Charles Wesley

The thing my God doth hate
That I no more may do;
Thy creature, Lord, again create,
And all my soul renew.

My soul shall then, like thine,
Abhor the thing unclean,
And, sanctified by love divine,
Forever cease from sin.

-- Charles Wesley

Ye ransomed sinners, hear,
The prisoners of the Lord,
And wait till Christ appear,
According to his word:
Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.

Let others hug their chains,
For sin and Satan plead,
And say, from sins' remains
They never can be freed:
Rejoice in hope, rejoice with me,
We shall from all our sins be free.

In God we put our trust;
If we our sins confess,
Faithful is he and just,
From all unrighteousness
To cleanse us all, both you and me,
We shall from all our sins be free.

-- Charles Wesley

Come, in this accepted hour;
Bring thy heavenly kingdom in!
Fill us with the glorious power,
Rooting out the seeds of sin;
Nothing more can we require,
We will covet nothing less:
Be thou all our hearts' desire,
All our joy, and all our peace!

-- Charles Wesley

My heart, thou knowest, can never rest,
Till thou create my peace;
Till, of my Eden repossessed,
From every sin I cease.

-- Charles Wesley

Holy Lamb, who thee receive,
Who in thee begin to live,
Day and night they cry to thee,
"As thou art, so let us be!"

Jesus, see my panting breast;
See, I pant in thee to rest;
Gladly would I now be clean;
Cleanse me now from every sin.

-- Tr. by John Wesley

Come, then, for Jesus' sake,
And bid my heart be clean;
An end of all my troubles make,
An end of all my sin.

I can not wash my heart,
But by believing thee,
And waiting for thy blood to impart
The spotless purity.

While at thy cross I lie,
Jesus, thy grace bestow;
Now thy all-cleansing blood apply,
And I am white as snow.

-- Charles Wesley

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. -- I John i, 7

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. -- Matt. viii, 48

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether

they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel. -- Col. 1, 19-23

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave him self for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. -- Titus ii, 11-14

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. -- Heb. xiii, 20, 21

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. -- Jude 24, 25

Certainly these quotations from the Word of God could be multiplied indefinitely. The constant thought in the great and wonderful plan of redemption is, that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, to save to the uttermost all who avail themselves of the privileges of the gospel. When he was upon earth he commanded the forces of nature, he healed all bodily diseases, he cured the incurable lepers, he called Lazarus back to life, and he forgave the sins of all penitents who trusted in him. All this ought to assure us that, in the range of gracious possibilities, a soul that has experienced the fullness of the blessing of the gospel may live in this world without the commission of sin.

There is a wide difference between voluntary and involuntary transgressions. The one brings condemnation on the soul, the other does not. Observe what Wesley says:

They are not condemned for sins of infirmity, as they are usually called. Perhaps it were advisable rather to call them infirmities, that we may not seem to give any countenance to sin, or to extenuate it in any degree, by thus coupling it with infirmity. But (if we must retain so ambiguous and dangerous an expression) by sins of infirmity I would mean such involuntary failings as the saying a thing we believe true, though in fact it proves to be false; or the hurting our neighbor without knowing or designing it, perhaps when we designed to do him good. Though these are deviations from the holy, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, yet they are not properly sins, nor do they bring any guilt on the conscience of "them which are in Christ Jesus." -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. I, pp. 70-73

The longer I live, the larger allowances I make for human infirmities. I exact more from myself and less from others. Go thou and do likewise. -- John Wesley --

I want you to be all love. This is the perfection I believe and teach. And this perfection is consistent with a thousand nervous disorders, which that high-strained perfection is not. -- John Wesley --

To set perfection too high, is the surest way to drive it out of the world. Whereunto you have attained, hold fast; never cast it away through a voluntary humility. -- John Wesley --

I still say, and without any self-contradiction, I know no persons living, who are so deeply conscious of their needing Christ, both as Prophet, Priest, and King, as those who believe themselves, and whom I believe, to be cleansed from sin; I mean from all pride, anger, evil desire, and unbelief. -- John Wesley --

To expect deliverance from wandering thoughts, occasioned by evil spirits, is to expect that the devil should die or fall asleep. To expect deliverance from those which are occasioned by other men, is to expect, either that men should cease from the earth, or that we should be absolutely excluded from them; and to pray for deliverance from those which are occasioned by the body is, in effect, to pray that we may leave the body. -- John Wesley --

We continually declare that there is no such perfection in this life as implies either a dispensation from doing good and attending all the ordinances of God, or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood. -- John Wesley --

The proposition which I hold is this: a person may be cleansed from all sinful tempers, and yet need the atoning blood. For what? For negligences and ignorances; for both words and actions, as well as omissions, which are, in a sense, transgressions of the perfect law; and I believe no one is clear of them till he lay his body down. -- John Wesley --

What! never speak one evil word,
Or rash, or idle, or unkind!
O, how shall I, most gracious Lord,
This mark of true perfection find?
Thy sinless mind in me reveal;
Thy Spirit's plenitude impart;
And all my spotless life shall tell
The abundance of a loving heart.

-- Charles Wesley

Shepherd Divine, our wants relieve,
In this our evil day;
To all thy tempted followers give
The power to watch and pray.
Long as our fiery trials last,
Long as the cross we bear,
O let our souls on thee be cast

In never-ceasing prayer.

-- Charles Wesley

Sin, in the sense in which we are using it, is the voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Every justified person may and should live free from every such transgression; must, indeed, do so in order to retain the justified state. Much more may it be affirmed that one who has experienced the fullness of the blessing of the gospel may and should live a sinless life in harmony with the above definition. But it must be observed that Methodism has always emphatically pointed out the difference between voluntary transgressions of the known law of God and the infirmities and mistakes that are incident to our human limitations. The highest states of grace attainable in this life have never presupposed omniscience. And just so long as knowledge concerning many things is very meager, we must conclude that, with the best intentions, there may be errors of judgment, and so there may be mistakes in daily life. We live in a world where we are met by frequent incitements and temptations, but there may be these and yet no sin. We dwell in tabernacles of clay, and in regard to the care and use of our bodies we may make mistakes without committing sin, though we ought constantly to remember that our bodies are indeed the temples of the Holy Ghost, and no defilement of them should be tolerated.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. -- I Cor. iii, 16, 17

We may be sure that the conditions which now surround us will continue practically as long as we remain in this world. Every one of the five senses is a possible avenue through which the tempter may reach the soul. We may never expect that measure of Divine guidance and control that will absolutely prevent us from making any mistakes. The light may grow clearer and stronger as our experience is enriched with the passing years of faithfulness; our scope of knowledge may broaden and become more accurate; we may find our faith growing stronger; the revelation of God's will concerning us may more and more unfold in his Word; the path of duty in great things and small things may become more and more plain, but there will be many, various, and great limitations that will only be removed when we reach that world where we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. At the same time it is the constant duty of the strongest and the wisest, as well as the weakest and the most ignorant, to strive for all knowledge, wisdom, and power, so that the will of God may be perfectly performed by each.

In this respect, as in all others bearing on the experience of the great blessing of perfect love, John Wesley's teachings are worthy of the most careful consideration. He says:

Christian perfection does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus, every one that is holy, is, in the Scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may observe that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is

perfect, he hath still need "to grow in grace," and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior. -- Wesley's Sermons Vol. I, p. 358

The essential part of Christian holiness is giving the heart wholly to God; and certainly we need not lose any degree of that light and love which at first attend this. It is our own infirmity if we do; it is not the will of the Lord concerning us. Your present business is not to reason whether you should call your experience thus or thus; but to go straight to him that loves you, with all your wants, how great or how many soever they are. Then all things are ready; help, while you ask, is given. You have only to receive it by simple faith. Nevertheless, you will still be encompassed with numberless infirmities, for you live in a house of clay, and therefore this corruptible body will, more or less, press down the soul, yet not so as to prevent your rejoicing evermore, and having a witness that your heart is his. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 51

In this [Sermon on Christian Perfection] I endeavored to show, (1) In what sense Christians are not, (2) In what sense they are, perfect.

(1) In what sense they are not. They are not perfect in knowledge. They are not free from ignorance, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible than to be omniscient. They are not free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behavior. From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God; neither can we expect till then to be wholly freed from temptation; for "the servant is not above his master." But neither in this sense is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

Q. What was the judgment of all our brethren who met at Bristol in August, 1758, on this head?

1. It was expressed in these words: (1) Every one may mistake as long as he lives. (2) A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. (3) Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, (4) Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. (5) It follows that the most perfect have continual need of the merit of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say for themselves, as well as for their brethren, "Forgive us our trespasses."

This easily accounts for what might otherwise seem to be utterly unaccountable; namely, that those who are not offended when we speak of the highest degree of love, yet will not hear of living without sin. The reason is, they know all men are liable to mistake, and that in practice as well as in judgment. But they do not know, or do not observe, that this is not sin if love is the sole principle of action.

Q. But still, if they live without sin, does not this exclude the necessity of a mediator? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office?

A. Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with himself. Hence his words are equally true of all men, in whatsoever state of grace they are: "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me; without [or separate from] me ye can do nothing."

In every state we need Christ in the following respects: (1) Whatever grace we receive it is a free gift from him. (2) We receive it as his purchase, merely in consideration of the price he paid. (3) We have this grace not only from Christ but in him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but as was said before, like that of a branch which united to the vine bears fruit, but, severed from it is dried up and withered. (4) All our blessings -- temporal, spiritual, and eternal -- depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office whereof therefore we have always equal need (5) The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office to atone for their short comings (as some not improperly speak), their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not properly sins we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul: "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law ... for love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii, 8-10) Now mistakes and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body are no way contrary to love, nor therefore, in the Scripture sense, sin.

To explain myself a little farther on this head (1) Not only sin properly so called (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law), but sin improperly so called (that is, an involuntary transgression of Divine law, known or unknown), needs the atoning blood. (2) I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. (3) Therefore "sinless perfection" is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. (4) I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. (5) Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

The holiest of men still need Christ as their prophet, as "the light of the world." For he does not give them light but from moment to moment; the instant he withdraws, all is darkness. They still need Christ as their King. For God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment nothing but unholiness will remain. They still need Christ as their Priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

O make me all like thee,
Before I hence remove;
Settle, confirm, and stablish me,
And build me up in love.

Let me thy witness live,
When sin is all destroyed;
And then my spotless soul receive,

And take me home to God.

-- Charles Wesley

With solemn faith we offer up,
And spread before thy glorious eyes,
That only ground of all our hope,
That precious bleeding Sacrifice,
Which brings thy grace on sinners down,
And perfects all our souls in one.

Acceptance through his only name,
Forgiveness in his blood, we have;
But more abundant life we claim
Through him, who died our souls to save,
To sanctify us by his blood,
And fill with all the life of God.

Father, behold thy dying Son,
And hear the blood that speaks above!
On us let all thy grace be shown;
Peace, righteousness, and joy, and love, --
Thy kingdom come to every heart,
And all thou hast, and all thou art.

-- Charles Wesley

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Chapter 13 MAY THE BLESSING BE LOST?

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.
To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill, --
O may it all my powers engage,
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live;
And O, thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give.
Help me to watch and pray,

And on thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

-- Charles Wesley

Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through his eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in his mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

Stand, then, in his great might,
With all his strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God:
That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts passed,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand entire at last.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the the whole:
Indissolubly joined,
To battle all proceed;
But arm yourselves with all the mind
That was in Christ, your Head.

-- Charles Wesley

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. For every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. -- I Cor. ix, 24-27

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. -- I Cor. xvi, 13

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. -- Gal. v, 1

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. -- 1 Cor. x, 12

If there were not ten thousand instances where those who have enjoyed the fullness of the blessing have fallen into sin, surely these passages from the Bible would clearly indicate the possibility of such falling. Paul, who knew the human heart, and who had a wide and protracted opportunity for observation, knew the danger, or he would never have written such imperative and urgent admonitions and exhortations and commands. Again and again his heart was grieved as he was compelled to witness the defection of those who had run well for a season, but had turned aside, lost their first love, and had denied the Lord that bought them. The messages of the Lord Jesus to the seven Churches abound in commands in harmony with the words of Paul.

It will not do to say that a state of religious experience is ever realized in this world where all peril is passed, and we are beyond the reach of the tempter's power. Nor need we flatter ourselves that those whose hearts have been cleansed, and who have received the unction of the Holy One, may not yield to temptation. Certainly there is no necessity of yielding. If clad with the whole armor of God, the soul may resist every fiery dart of the enemy, and wisely and courageously wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, may come off victorious in every spiritual battle and go on from conquering to conquer.

We need to remember that pure and holy angels, surrounded by all helpful influences, fell from their first estate, and lost forever the hope of restoration. Adam and Eve were absolutely pure and sinless as they came from the hand of God. True they had the same natures as our own, yet without the slightest taint of depravation, and still they gave way to temptation and fell. The commands and requirements of God were neither severe nor onerous. They had abundant strength to resist; their Creator was ever near, and their fellowship with him was personal and blessed. It would seem as though it might have been an easy thing for them to spurn the temptation and the tempter; but they did not, and so brought wreck and ruin upon themselves and all their posterity.

In these days the danger is greatest to those who are utterly confident of their imperviousness to temptation; to those who are sure that they will never stray away into sin, to those who neglect to recognize that the law of liberty will not tolerate any infraction of the moral law. When one presumes that he has attained a position where the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the strictest teachings of the Bible in regard to moral conduct do not apply to him, then constantly he is in the greatest possible danger. The world, the flesh, and the devil must be recognized as the foes of all goodness, purity, and holiness. Careless souls are ever in peculiar danger. Boastful and overconfident souls are above all others in greatest peril.

Let the tried and tempted cry out:
Unto thee, my Help, my Hope,
My Safeguard, and my Tower,
Confident I still look up,
And still receive thy power;
All the alien's hosts I chase,
Blast and scatter with mine eyes;
Satan comes; I turn my face,

And, lo! the Tempter flies.

-- Charles Wesley

But what says John Wesley to this important question? Can those who have found the fullness of the blessing lose it?

I am well assured they can; matter of fact puts this beyond dispute. Formerly we thought, one saved from sin could not fall; now we know the contrary. We are surrounded with instances of those who lately experienced all that I mean by perfection. They had both the fruit of the Spirit, and the witness; but they have now lost both. Neither does any one stand by virtue of anything that is implied in the nature of the state. There is no such height or strength of holiness as it is impossible to fall from. If there be any that can not fall, this wholly depends on the promise of God. -- Wesley's "Plain Account"

I went to Sheffield, and on Tuesday met the select Society. But it was reduced from sixty to twenty; and but half of these retained all that they once received! What a grievous error, to think those that are saved from sin can not lose what they have gained! It is a miracle if they do not; seeing all earth and hell are so enraged against them. -- Wesley's Journal, July, 1774

As long as we dwell in a house of clay, it is liable to affect the mind; sometimes by dulling or darkening the understanding, and sometimes more directly by damping and depressing the soul, and sinking it into distress and heaviness. In this state, doubt or fear, of one kind or another, will naturally arise. And the prince of this world, who well knows whereof we are made, will not fail to improve the occasion, in order to disturb, though he can not pollute, the heart which God hath cleansed from all unrighteousness. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 776

A will steadily and uniformly devoted to God is essential to a state of sanctification; but not a uniformity of joy, or peace, or happy communion with God. These may rise and fall in various degrees; nay, and may be affected either by the body or by diabolical agency, in a manner which all our wisdom can neither understand nor prevent. As to wanderings, you would do right well to consider the sermon on "Wandering Thoughts." -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 58

It is a common thing for those who are sanctified, to believe they can not fall; to suppose themselves pillars in the temple of God, that shall go out no more. Nevertheless, we have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, moved from their steadfastness. Sometimes suddenly, but oftener, by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation; and pride, or anger, or foolish desires, have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay, sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin hath regained dominion over them.

Several of these, after being thoroughly sensible of their fall, and deeply ashamed before God, have been again filled with love, and not only perfected therein, but stablished, strengthened, and settled. They have received the blessing they had before, with abundant increase. -- Wesley's Sermons, Vol. II, p. 247

Q. Can those who fall from this state recover it?

A. Why not? We have instances of this also. Nay it is an exceeding common thing for persons to lose it more than once before they are established therein. It is therefore to guard them who are saved from sin from every occasion of stumbling that I give the following advice.

Q. What is the first advice that you would give them?

A. Watch and pray continually against pride. If God has cast it out, see that it enter no more; it is full as dangerous as evil desire, and you may slide back into it unawares, especially if you think there is no danger of it. "Nay, but I ascribe all I have to God." So you may, and be proud nevertheless. For it is pride not only to ascribe anything we have to ourselves, but to think we have what we really have not. You ascribe all knowledge you have to God, and in this respect you are humble. But if you think you have more than you really have, or if you think you are so taught of God as no longer to need man's teaching, pride lieth at the door.

Do not, therefore, say to any that would advise or reprove you, "You are blind; you can not teach me;" do not say, "This is your wisdom, your carnal reason;" but calmly weigh the thing before God. -- Wesley's "Plain Account"

I was considering how it was, that so many who were once filled with love are now weak and faint. And the case is plain; the invariable rule of God's proceeding is, "From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath." Hence, it is impossible that any should retain what they receive without improving it. Add to this, that the more we have received, the more of care and labor is required, the more watchfulness and prayer, the more circumspection and earnestness in all manner of conversation. Is it any wonder, then, that they who forget this should soon lose what they had received? Nay, who were taught to forget it? Not to watch! Not to pray -- under pretense of praying always! -- Wesley's Journal, February, 1765

True the blessing may be lost, but there is no compelling power in the universe. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are constantly ready to afford all needed help and grace. All good angels are ministering spirits, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. i, 14.) Not all the powers of darkness, however malignant and persistent, can overthrow the child of God and turn him from his course unless he himself consents. It needs a firm and steadfast will, a will inspired by love and loyalty, and acting with wide-open-eyed intelligence. Then there must be genuine honesty and sincerity of soul, so that the heart-searching and rein-trying God may walk unhindered through every chamber of the whole being. Then, there must be the constant and faithful performance of every duty to God and man. Then there must be much study of God's Word, and meditation thereon, and all the more will the truth give great help and comfort if it be stored away in memory, so, that, like the Savior when he was tempted, we can instantly recall some precious passage that precisely suits the moment's need. Then it will greatly help if we read good books, and especially the lives of saintly men and women. Then there may be found in our Christian hymns, and especially in the hymns of the Wesleys, much that will strengthen faith, inspire hope, and develop undaunted courage. Then there remains the refuge of prayer. It will greatly help to hold frequent personal intercourse with those who have a rich experience of Divine things, and it will be especially profitable to meet with them for seasons of united prayer; but the greatest help will usually be found in the closet; when alone with God the soul pours out its glad

tribute of thanksgiving, converses with God as a man converses with his friend, talks with Jesus, and listens for the voice of the Comforter. Then, if there are burdens too heavy for human strength, perplexities too great for finite wisdom to solve; if there are sorrows that wound and crush; if there are conflicts and trials and temptations that seem too great to be borne, the soul may tell the blessed heavenly Father all about these things and ask him, in Jesus' name, to send relief, deliverance, and victory, and prayer will be answered, and the soul will find that God is nigh at hand, and not afar off to those who really put their trust in him.

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Chapter 14

CONTINUAL GROWTH ATTENDS THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING

Love only can the conquest win,
The strength of sin subdued:
Come, O my Savior, cast out sin,
And form my soul anew.

No longer then my heart shall mourn,
While sanctified by grace,
I only for thy glory burn,
And always see thy face.

-- Charles Wesley

My will be swallowed up in thee;
Light in thy light still may I see,
Beholding thee with open face;
Called the full power of faith to prove,
Let all my hallowed heart be love,
And all my spotless life be praise.

-- Charles Wesley

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. -- Eph. i, 15-20

Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, the ye may grow thereby if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone disallowed indeed

of men but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. -- I Peter ii, 1-5

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. -- 2 Peter iii, 18

Unquestionably the Scriptures never anticipate the attainment of a religious experience which will preclude the idea of growth, and development. There is no rational ground for the assumption that maturity of the spiritual life limits growth. In nature, maturity implies that a condition has been reached where there is no further growth. Mature fruit remains in that condition for a brief time, and then the processes of decay commence and dissolution takes place. Every tree and every plant that grows on the earth has a commencement of life and growth. The plant may reach maturity in a few days, or the tree may take a hundred years; but when maturity is reached, and maintained for a longer or shorter time, then decay is sure to follow, and this decay results inevitably in death.

In the case of Christian experience no such conditions exist. There is, and there can be, no maturity that does not admit of further growth and increase. The maturity that is predicated of the plant, the tree, the human body, can not be predicated of the soul, nor of the faculties and capabilities of the soul. The soul may advance, may increase in strength and scope of spiritual life from age to age as long as eternity endures, and this without the contingency of decay and dissolution. The growth of the soul may be perpetual. It knows nothing of a maturity that culminates in decay and dissolution.

It is evident that when the fullness of the blessing is enjoyed, then the conditions are such as to favor a continuous, harmonious, and rapid growth, not only in strength of faith, and abundance of comfort, but in the power to overcome temptation, and intelligently to follow the commands and imitate the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perfect love casts out fear. A humble, but at the same time a confident trust, gives courage and holy joy. When Jesus reigns supreme in the human heart, all the enemies are on the outside of the citadel. When all is on the altar for service, there need be no further debate in regard to anything of personal concern. When the hand of Jesus is grasped with tender affection, there can be no doubt as to the wisdom of the leadership along life's devious ways. No desert place will ever be reached while he guides where there are not daily supplies of heavenly manna, and no rock will ever be found so hard that it may not be made to pour forth cooling streams of crystal water, and no path will be so rough and thorny as to hinder one's onward march. When probation closes, and the streets of gold are reached, when once inside the gates of pearl the conditions are altogether unlike those of earth. The environment of a redeemed soul, translated from the battlefields of earth to the eternal home of the saints, must be most highly conducive to progress in knowledge and the increase of spiritual power.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. -- 1 John iii, 2

But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord. -- 2 Cor. iii, 18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. -- Rom. viii, 18

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. -- Rev. vii, 14-17

Paint and picture the glories of the world beyond the confines of time and sense as wonderful as the most vivid imagination is capable, and we may still be absolutely sure that the reality far exceeds anything which the human mind has ever conceived. We can be perfected in love in this life. The little child can love God with all the powers of its limited mind, might, and strength; and so the aged saint, with many years of experience and of intellectual and spiritual development, can perfectly love God in proportion to his capacity; but we may rest assured that the most advanced of all the saints that have ever walked this earth have at the close of life but just commenced their eternal career. Ever advancing, ever rising, ever growing, ever climbing loftier peaks of vision, they will go on from glory to glory while eternal ages shall roll their endless rounds. And this in part because the environment of heaven is always and in all respects helpful. Blessed are the souls that shall overcome in all the conflicts of this earthly life by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

O what a mighty change
Shall Jesus' sufferers know,
While o'er the happy plains they range,
Incapable of woe!
No ill-requited love
Shall there our spirits wound:
No base ingratitude above,
No sin in heaven is found.

No slightest touch of pain,
Nor sorrow's least alloy,
Can violate our rest, or stain
Our purity of joy:
In that eternal day
No clouds or tempests rise;
There gushing tears are wiped away
Forever from our eyes.

-- Charles Wesley

The possibilities of an eternal, blissful existence in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the companionship and love and service of the pure and holy angels, the fellowship of the saints of all ages, the unending reunions with the loved ones who have gone on before, ought to inspire every soul to seek for all the fullness of the blessing of the gospel in this life, and at the same time inspire with a lofty and deathless purpose to make sure of realizing all that is offered to us, in time and eternity, through the redemptive work of the Son of God.

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Chapter 15

THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING A PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN WORK

O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell, but thy pure love alone!
O may thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
Strange flames far from my heart remove;
My every act, word, thought be love.

-- Tr. by John Wesley

That I thy mercy may proclaim,
That all mankind thy truth may see,
Hallow thy great and glorious name,
And perfect holiness in me.

Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The mind which was in Christ impart,
And let my spirit cleave to thee.

O that I now, from sin released,
Thy word may to the utmost prove
Enter into the promised rest,
The Canaan of thy perfect love.

-- Charles Wesley

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee. -- Psalms li, 12, 13

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. -- Psalms cxxvi, 6

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in

me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. -- John xv, 4-6

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. -- 2 Tim. ii, 21.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. -- Phil. i, 9-11

For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. -- Col. i, 9-11

God expects abundant fruit of all his children. His expectations are measured by what he has bestowed. All other things being equal, he expects more of the one on whom he has bestowed ten talents than of the one on whom he has bestowed only five. And he expects more of the one on whom he has bestowed ten talents than of the one on whom he has bestowed but a single talent. Obligation, responsibility, duty, are measured by what we have received. Every Christian believer has received much from his fellow-disciples. Great good comes from association with those who are God's people, from the prayers that are offered, the hymns that are sung, the words of counsel and encouragement that are spoken, and from the inspiring examples of patience, fortitude, faith, devotion, zeal, and love that are constantly manifest. All this help received along the years must involve a vast debt that can only be discharged by the most faithful and loving service in behalf of others. The debt is ever increasing as the years go on, and nothing but the most inexcusable selfishness will deny the obligation or refuse to meet its fullest claims.

But what God does for us is of infinitely more value than anything or all things that our fellow-men can do for us. Everything that is good and beautiful comes from the hand of the heavenly Father. All of comfort and joy that earthly blessings bring comes from him. Whatever elevates us in the scale of being is his gift. All spiritual mercies, all grace, all present rest, all hopes and aspirations indulged in and cherished for future bliss and eternal victory, come from God. In truth, we have received everything from him and we owe him all love and loyal service.

When we have received any favor from God we ought to retire, if not into our closets, into our hearts, and say: I come, Lord, to restore to thee what thou hast given, and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or in earth in thy presence but a void capable of being filled with thee and by thee, as the air which is void and dark is capable of being filled with the light of the sun? Grant, therefore, O Lord, that I may never appropriate thy grace to myself any more than the air appropriates to itself the light of the sun, which withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates its light or resists it. O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring thy grace

and good works! I say thine, for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in thee, not in me. -- John Wesley: "Plain Account"

Again, Wesley says of the Christian and his relation to God:

All the commandments of God he accordingly keeps, and that with all his might; for his obedience is in proportion to his love, the source from whence it flows. And therefore, loving God with all his heart, he serves him with all his strength; he continually presents his soul and "body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;" entirely and without reserve devoting himself, all he has, all he is, to his glory. All the talents he has, he constantly employs according to his Master's will; every power and faculty of his soul, every member of his body.

Agreeable to this his one desire, is the one design of his life; namely, "to do not his own will, but the will of him that sent him." His one intention at all times and in all places is not to please himself, but him whom his soul loveth. He hath a single eye; and because his "eye is single, his whole body is full of light. The whole is light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth enlighten the house." God reigns alone; all that is in the soul is "holiness to the Lord." There is not a motion in his heart but is according to his will. Every thought that arises points to him, and is in "obedience to the law of Christ." -- John Wesley "Plain Account"

Now, these responsibilities can never be fully met unless the uttermost salvation is experienced. The duties we owe to our fellow-men and to God can never be rightly discharged unless we possess the fullness of the blessing of the gospel. And this involves the idea of a conscious, personal, and definite experience of salvation. Without such an experience, we can not accomplish the work God requires, nor can we exert the best possible influence upon those with whom we associate, nor can we succeed in winning souls to Christ.

Where Christian perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God, and consequently little addition to the society, and little life in the members of it. Therefore, if Jacob Rowell is grown faint, and says but little about it, do you supply his lack of service. Speak and spare not. Let not regard for any man induce you to betray the truth of God. Till you press the believers to expect full salvation now, you must not look for any revival. -- Wesley's Journal, Vol. VI, p. 721

To Miss H. A. Roe, 1782: In the success of Mr. Leech's preaching we have one proof of a thousand that the blessing of God always attends the publishing of full salvation as attainable now by simple faith. You should always have in readiness that little tract, "The Plain Account of Christian Perfection." There is nothing that would so effectually stop the mouths of those who call this "a new doctrine." All who thus object are really (though they suspect nothing less) seeking sanctification by works. If it be by works, then certainly these will need time, in order to the doing of these works. But if it is by faith, it is plain a moment is as a thousand years. Then God says (in the spiritual, as in the outward world), "Let there be light, and there is light." -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 195

To his brother Charles, 1768: I rejoice to hear, from various persons, so good an account of the work of God in London. You did not come thither without the Lord; and you find your labor

is not in vain. I doubt not but you will see more and more fruit, while you converse chiefly with them that are athirst for God. I find a wonderful difference in myself when I am among these, and when I am among fashionable Methodists. On this account the north of England suits me best, where so many are groaning after full redemption. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VI, p. 672

To Rev. Samuel Beardsley, 1772: Dear Sammy, -- It is a great blessing that your fellow-laborers and you are all of one mind. When that is so, the work of the Lord will prosper in your hands. It will go on widening, as well as deepening, while you draw in one yoke. If you desire it should deepen in believers, continually exhort them to go on unto perfection, steadily to use all the grace they have received, and every moment to expect full salvation. The "Plain Account of Christian Perfection" you should read yourself, more than once, and recommend it to all that are groaning for full redemption. -- Wesley's Works, Vol. VII, p. 129

The history of Methodism, and the history of the Christian Church in all ages, shows that the greatest spiritual results have been secured when the highest possible experience of Divine things has been taught and encouraged. When a holy ministry proclaims a free and full salvation, when professors of religion come to enjoy the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ there will ever be present the awakening, convicting, and converting grace of God. The combination of gospel truth and holy living must move the world, must convince gainsayers, and bring about pervasive and continuous revivals.

The cold-hearted, the indifferent, the backslidden, the worldly, the pleasure-loving professor of religion does not, and he can not while he remains in this condition, do what is demanded of him. First of all, the soul that would do the work which God has a right to expect, and which he does expect, must know that all the sins of the past are pardoned; he must know that he is fully justified; he must know that he is regenerated; he must know that he is adopted into the heavenly family; he must know that there has come to him the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire; that his heart is cleansed from all sin; that the enduement of power for all possible service is his; that he loves God with all his mind, might, and strength; that he loves his neighbor as himself; that he lives not for himself, but to benefit and bless his fellow-men and glorify God.

Remember that this experience is the privilege of every professor of religion; indeed, of every Church member and of every person who would be a child of God and an heir of the heavenly inheritance. It is not an experience that may be hoped for by only the select few, the cultured, the refined, the wealthy, the intellectual, the highly-favored, but rather it is for these, and also for the poorest, the humblest, the lowliest, the most obscure, those least esteemed of men, and those who most distrust themselves. It is for servants and handmaidens; for young men who see visions, and old men who dream dreams; for children and youth; for sons and daughters; for as many as the Lord our God shall call; and surely he calls every one who reads these words, or who shall ever read the all-including promises of God as found alike in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The experience may be attained; and, when attained, then one has the preparation requisite for the wise, right, and successful performance of all the work of God. This is the experience necessary for the private Christian. With it he will be salt and light; he will exert a precious influence whether at home or abroad, whether in the shop or store, or wherever he may toil for his daily bread. Every Church official, every local preacher, every Sunday-school worker, every Epworth League officer, every steward, every trustee, every class-leader, surely ought to

have this blessed experience. These are in positions of honor and responsibility; their example will tell on all the membership, from the oldest to the youngest. If these could only have the fullness of the blessing of the gospel, how the Churches would thrive and grow, and how revivals would everywhere prevail; how converts would be multiplied; how the lambs of the flock would be fed and sheltered, and the coming of the King be hastened!

Surely every pastor, every one called to preach the gospel, every one having the care of precious souls for whom the Lord of Glory died, ought to have this experience. Nothing will answer for a substitute. If this be lacking, nothing can be found to supply its place. Eloquence, oratory, scholarship, dignity of behavior, faithfulness in the performance of routine duties, hard study in the preparation of sermons, vast intellectual attainments, wealth of resources, highest appointments, -- all, all will be in vain without this precious, glorious experience. There may be large congregations, abundant salaries, elegant parsonages, and splendid churches; the multitudes may be pleased, flattered, and possibly instructed in many things; but sinners are not convicted, alarmed, and in penitence brought to Christ; nor are believers built up in the faith; men are not saved from their sins, and made meet for heaven, unless the pastor has this fullness of the gospel, or is earnestly seeking for it. How can any soul frame an excuse for not seeking and finding this experience? Surely not one can be found that will be valid in this world, much less at the judgment seat.

The experience is attainable by each and every one. The plan of redemption provides for this in every case. If it is not realized, it is not the fault of God. The conditions upon which it may be secured are possible to all. Why, O why, should any one hesitate to accept the gift God so freely offers?

Fields ripe for the harvest wave on every hand. The Master calls for reapers. He waits for willing souls. He will completely prepare and equip each toiler for his task. A heart cleansed from all sin, a soul filled with love to God and man, and the whole nature strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and a quenchless longing for the salvation of the souls for whom Christ died, -- all these being included in the experience of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel, and the preparation is complete for the performance of all the work that God expects from his children.

The centuries accumulate. It is almost nineteen hundred years since the Lord of life and glory left this redeemed world to take his place on the right hand of God the Father. With infinite love and unspeakable yearning he waits for the consummation of his toil, and suffering, and death. More than half of all the millions of earth have never heard the name of Jesus. They never will hear it, except from human lips. The disciples of Jesus must carry the gospel to all the nations. They can only do this effectively when they are fully saved themselves.

God grant that each one reading these closing words may have the experience, and then, by constant holy living, importunate, all-conquering prayer, and ever-faithful labors of love for perishing souls, prove to a wondering world its reality, sweetness, and power!

Jesus, thine all-victorious love
Shed in my heart abroad:
Then shall my feet no longer rove,

Rooted and fixed in God.

O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow,
Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow!

O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call;
Spirit of burning, come!

Refining fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.

My steadfast soul, from falling free,
Shall then no longer move,
While Christ is all the world to me,
And all my heart is love.

-- Charles Wesley

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THE END