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THAT YE SIN NOT
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Studies in First John

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FOREWORD

"All that we deeply love," said Helen Keller, "becomes a part of us." The writer of this book has been a devoted and diligent student of God's Word. He has made it very much a part of his life. He has memorized large segments of it. He has loved its history, its poetry, its prophecy,

its literary excellencies. He has studied its original languages. Above all, he has seen in it the guidelines for holy living. As he shares with us these messages from First John, his love for the Word shines through.

It has been said that the "Bible is a chart and not a charm. The unopened Bible is like an unopened bank vault. The unread Bible may have a beautiful binding, but it does not bind up the wounds of society."

The messages of this writer will challenge us to open again the Word of God and to see in the pages of First John the remedy for all sin, and to discover anew the travel directions for the wayfarer who is seeking the high road of holy living. God's answer to sin and His provision for victorious living are found in the pages of this Epistle. The writer reminds us as spiritual pilgrims headed for the Heavenly City that we have indeed in First John "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

-- Earl C. Wolf

* * * * *

PREFACE

First John breathes the very atmosphere of victory all the way through. A study of this short Epistle is very rewarding.

Bible scholars differ a little as to the exact date when it was written, but all agree that it was when John was in advanced years.

Some think John wrote this First Epistle after he had written the Book of Revelation. However that may be, he writes out of a matured Christian experience. It does seem that it had been about 50 years or longer since John walked with the Saviour along the dusty roads of Judea, or along the shores of Galilee.

Those who believe one has to "sin every day in word, thought, and deed" find little to support their theory in First John. Those who believe one will always have to put up with the sin nature the carnal mind -- run into difficulty when they come to this book. It is "too hot to handle," for it deals a deathblow to "the old man."

As important as this Epistle of First John is to holy people, it seems strange that so little has been written on it, other than what we find in commentaries. The only classic we have in this field, known to this writer, is *Half Hours with Saint John's Epistles*, written by Daniel Steele in 1901.

This present treatise is a simple effort to emphasize heart cleansing, to point out why we can be victorious Christians, and to emphasize also those other phases of holy living that are brought out so encouragingly here. "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (I John 1:4).

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01 -- THE LINGERING VISION

In the very first verse of the first chapter of First John, we have a most beautiful statement: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (I John 1:1).

When John says, "We have heard," and, "We have seen," the perfect tense of these statements reveals a blessed truth. John is actually saying: "That which we have heard [and it is still ringing in our ears], which What we see depends on what we are. What we see depends on where we are. What we see depends on how we are. What we see depends on who we are.

There was a lot of difference between the vision of Ahab and that of Elijah the day the rains came. Ahab went to his tents to eat and drink and refresh himself after the contest. But Elijah, who had probably walked part of the way up the hill with the king, went on to the mountain top to pray for rain. Ahab envisioned the angry wife, Jezebel, whom he was going to have to tell of the outcome. But Elijah saw the drought of three and one-half years broken, and heard the sound of "abundance of rain."

There was a lot of difference between the vision of Elisha and that of the young Bible college student the day they were surrounded by the horses and chariots of the enemy. Elisha prayed for the young man's eyes to be opened, that he might see God's army, which outnumbered the enemy (II Kings 6:17).

There was a lot of difference between the viewpoints of the lame man at the gate of the Temple and the Apostle Peter that afternoon. A moment before, the helpless man could see only the coins he might receive; a moment later he was "walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8).

An old master marksman was teaching a young man the use of the bow and arrow. They had decided on the target of a bird perched on a small limb near the top of a tall tree. Pointing the arrow at the feathered creature, the student was asked what he saw.

"I see," he said, "the tree, the branch, and the bird,"

"Don't shoot yet," was the admonition. "Take a better aim, and then tell me what you see."

"I see the branch and the bird," the young fellow replied.

"You are not ready to shoot yet," said the older one. "Take a closer aim."

After a pause he asked again, "What do you see now?"

"I see the bird only," was the answer.

"Then shoot," the man replied. We need the "single eye."

On the Mount of Transfiguration, after the vision had passed, it is said that the disciples, having looked around, "saw no man any more, save Jesus only" (Mark 9:8).

Someone has observed that, while at the Transfiguration scene, Peter made a motion that they build three tabernacles there, but that the motion died for want of a second. For John it was the sustained vision which meant the most to him. This was what held him steady in his most trying experiences, even when threatened by martyrdom. We can never be the same after we have had a good look at Christ.

1. A vision of Christ helps us to see everything else in its proper perspective.
2. A vision of Christ makes all of us transformed persons.
3. A vision of Christ makes it possible for us to know what He wants us to do.
4. A vision of Christ reveals to us that which is truly beautiful in the One who is "altogether lovely."
5. A vision of Christ adds color and luster to all the finer and better things of life.
6. A vision of Christ enables us to see the value of a lost soul, for without this we will never know how much one means to Him.
7. A vision of Christ helps to soften up all the hard places in life and to make it easier to take up our cross and follow Him.
8. A vision of Christ challenges us to see what we can do to bring others to this same place of beholding.
9. A vision of Christ lifts spiritual things to their proper level, since we then have anointed eyes to see them.
10. A vision that lingers is for all who will get alone with their Lord and, closing their eyes to all else, will wait upon Him for the illumination of the Spirit.

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02 -- CLEANSING-CRISIS AND PROCESS

Nowhere in the Bible is the subject of cleansing more clearly dealt with than in the first chapter of First John. In two very familiar verses we have the whole truth of cleansing summed up:

"But 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" (1:7).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9).

Let us consider the latter verse first.

The word "cleanse" is in the aorist tense. This, in the Greek, means a completed action. We sometimes simplify it by calling it the all-at-once tense. In this verse also, note that the word "sins" is plural. The matter of their confession and forgiveness is perfectly clear. But the conjunction "and" means that something else is to be considered. This is not merely saying the same thing twice -- in two different ways. Besides the grammatical construction which separates the two, a different word is used, and also a different number. This clearly indicates that some other matter is being dealt with. The structure of the original Greek makes a significant comparison of the words "sins," the singular condition identified by "sin," and also "unrighteousness." In the Greek, this "unrighteousness" is singular in number, and all the force of the mechanics back of this language show that two different things are happening here. One is a forgiveness of actions (plural), and the other is a removing, by the act of cleansing, of something else that is singular in number. It can mean nothing else but the carnal nature -- the sin nature that is so often referred to in the New Testament.

Note the words "cleanse" and "cleanseth." (We are using them in the reverse order for simplification.) The word "cleanse" in verse 9 is in the aorist tense. This is the initial cleansing, or the all-at-once act of removal. The word "cleanseth" in verse 7, however, is in the present tense, and means that we are continually kept clean.

Let us "slow down the projector" and watch the pictures (phrases of these verses) move slowly before us. To paraphrase, verse 9 would be saying this: "If we will now confess our sins, He will in one gracious act [aorist] forgive us our sins, for He is faithful and just, and will in one complete act [aorist] cleanse us from the sin nature" ("unrighteousness").

The seventh verse will now read: "If we are now walking in the light, as He is now in the light, we are now presently having fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses now, and keeps on cleansing [present active tense] us from all the sin nature." The word for "sin" here in verse 7 is singular.

Our cleansing is thus begun in a crisis, but is sustained in a process. It is brought about, initially, as a complete work in a moment. It is sustained in its completeness as we continue to keep contact in the same way with God.

It ought to be pointed out that our being kept cleansed is conditioned upon our continuing to "walk in the light." We have sometimes left the impression that there is some kind of mechanical action that takes place in us, so that once it occurs the situation could never be reversed. This would mean that, once we are cleansed, nothing could ever happen to change that condition.

But this is not a mechanical operation on our nature. It is not like an operation for appendicitis. This is a spiritual experience, based on the way we approach God. The "if" clause is employed in both verses. Sins are not forgiven unless we confess them. Cleansing cannot take place unless we walk in the light, and keep walking in it.

People often ask, "If the old man is really crucified, how does he ever get resurrected again?" We must be careful not to carry our analogies too far, of course, for this would bring confusion to us. Let us simplify the matter by stating that it is as we walk in the light that we are cleansed. This principle of cooperation with the Lord must be taking place all the time. When it is, we get results. When we default, we do not.

But walking in the light that brings cleansing is neither difficult nor strange. It is something we do naturally as Christians. It is almost as automatic as breathing. It is second nature to us.

Oh, the Blood! the Blood! is all my plea.
Hallelujah, for it cleanseth me!

Cleansing is first mentioned in Exodus, where the big altar for the burnt offering was cleansed after it had been used, and was then anointed and sanctified. The lepers are cleansed in Leviticus.

The house of the Lord is cleansed under Hezekiah in II Chronicles.

Ezekiel quotes the Lord promising to cleanse "from all your filthiness, and from all your idols" (36:25).

Job speaks of being "cleansed from my sin" (35:3).

The Psalmist says, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency" (Ps. 73:13).

Cleansing in the New Testament is applied to lepers, to the creatures on the great sheet Peter saw in his vision, and it is also applied to the Church that Paul describes in the Ephesian Letter.

These references will suffice to show the way this word is employed all through the Bible. It is understood to mean the complete removal of that which defiled, and complete deliverance from everything which contaminated.

Cleansing means these things to us as Christians today:

1. That the "old man" Paul spoke of can be crucified.
2. That the sinful nature can be completely purged out of our lives.

3. That the alluring and soliciting nature within us can be removed, so that temptations are all on the outside.

4. That the "fifth columnist" in our hearts can be put out.

5. That the Christian can serve the Lord without interruption from warring forces on the inside.

6. That we will be able to serve the Lord with all our hearts, and souls and minds and strength.

7. That we are made whole from the disease of sin, with which we were onetime afflicted.

8. That there is an enjoyable witness of the Holy Spirit to the purity of our hearts, with which we now serve the Lord.

9. That we are experiencing the fact of an uttermost salvation (Heb. 7:25).

10. That we can experience from day to day the victory that Jesus promised we may enjoy through the sanctifying power.

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03 -- CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SINNERS

One verse in I John that has been the object of much controversy is:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1:8).

If we were to expand this verse in the original Greek, it says something like this: "If we are now saying that we do not now have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The import is the same.

To understand this verse, we must keep it in its setting, and not make it an isolated passage apart from the context.

To make this verse indicate that everybody sins, and that we are really all sinners, involves the passage with what Daniel Steele calls "The Law of Non-contradiction." He goes on to say that to make this passage try to stand by itself does these two things:

"1. It contradicts the design of the Epistle -- 'That ye sin not.'

"2. It contradicts the whole tenor of this Epistle as found in numerous declarations scattered from beginning to end." [1]

To make this verse declare that all Christians are sinners is to do the same violence as to say that the seventh chapter of Romans pictures the highest experience that Paul preached. We know that in both the sixth and eighth chapters Paul testifies to, and preaches, a complete victory over all sin through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

John is starting at the beginning with this eighth verse. That is, he is starting with the average person who has not yet had a change of heart. It is similar to the verse: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

To talk with a person about becoming a Christian and have him say that he does not have sin in his life in the first place would make him a candidate for this verse. For just as Paul says, "All have sinned," John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." We do have sin, all of us, until something happens to remove it. John is careful to point out this "something" in both the seventh and ninth verses. To try to make this eighth verse apply to those who have been cleansed from sin involves a contradiction, and does violence to what the scripture is saying throughout this whole Epistle.

Harmonizing this verse with its context, and making it fit in with the whole tenor of this wonderful Epistle, it becomes clear that (1) individuals may be forgiven of every sin that they have ever committed, and (2) may then undergo a thorough cleansing of the inner nature, and remain in that state as they continue to walk in the light.

The last verse of this short chapter seems to say the same thing as verse 8: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1:10)..

If we take these two negative verses together, we find them saying: If we say we have no sin, or if we say we have never sinned in the first place, it all amounts to an untruth.

John counters with some strong statements prefaced by "but" and "if." He says, "But if we walk in the light..." and, "If we confess our sins..." and follows each with concrete arguments for the removal of sin in every form. There is deliverance for all.

Are we all sinners? Is every person we meet day after day a sinning individual? The grand answer is, "No!" Every page of this Epistle affirms that there is forgiveness for all our sins, and there is cleansing from all our sin. Assurance is given that we can live in a sinful world with hearts that are washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

Christians are not sinners. To say this would make it necessary to "impeach the truthfulness of both Paul and John." For they both declare, as Daniel Steele points out, that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

We sum up this statement with these observations:

1. Christians are not sinners, because they have found a remedy for the disease of sin.

2. Christians are not sinners, because they have found that the blood of Jesus "reaches deeper than the stain of sin has gone."

3. Christians are not sinners, because they have found an experience that has changed them at the depths of their beings.

4. Christians are not sinners, because a complete price was paid for their redemption on Calvary's cross.

5. Christians are not sinners, because there has been fulfilled in them this experience: "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4).

6. Christians are not sinners, because of what Christ himself has wrought in their lives. It is a divine transaction.

7. Christians are not sinners, because Christ's purpose in coming into the world was to save from sin.

8. Christians are not sinners, because they have changed masters. Whereas they once served Satan and lived in sin, now they serve Christ and are lifted above the sin level.

9. Christians are not sinners, because the Bible teaches that men can be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, can be transformed and changed from darkness into "marvellous light."

10. Christians are not sinners, because they have met Bible conditions and have gotten Bible results. True repentance results in a conscience freed from guilt and condemnation, and a witness of the Spirit to our own sustained spiritual relationship with Christ.

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04 -- MUST WE SIN?

A common statement heard among professed Christians these days is, "We are all sinners." The only difference, they say, is that some of us are "saved sinners" while others are not. But still they insist, "We are really all sinners." Some even seem to be very pious about it, as though it savored of some kind of humility. Their perpetual penitence appears to them to be a sign of deep spirituality.

But the Bible does not support this kind of religion. This is not what Jesus died on the Cross to provide. The Scriptures read, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21) -- not "in their sins" but "from their sins." And, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

But probably the most direct statement is found right here in this Epistle:

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not (2:1).

The word for "sin" here in this verse is in the aorist tense. As previously noted, this is the tense that denotes a completed action. Whatever happens is a completed action, not a process. This verse reads this way in the Greek: "My little children, I am now writing to you in order that ye may not once sin."

John uses the same tense in the last half of this same verse when he says, "And if any man sin..." John is implying that a true Christian would not go along committing sins. It would be an isolated incident if it did happen. He doesn't expect it, and thinks of it as other than normal. But, he says, if it does happen, we have a Pleader, and we have an Advocate. We have Someone who will go to court and plead our case for us.

Why would John write such a statement under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit if it were not a possibility? Why would he say that the very purpose of his whole letter is to the intent "that ye sin not"? This is his theme. This is the heart of his message. This is the point he wants to get across. And he is bold enough here to say that Christians can attain such an experience that they "sin not" or "may not once sin." This is really good news. But isn't that the gospel message after all -- that we can be lifted out of our sins? Thank God, it is so!

It would be hard to see in this verse any ground for sinning every day and getting forgiven every night. Or sinning all week, and finding forgiveness in the worship service on Sunday morning. Sin is banned. Sin is outlawed. God will have nothing to do with it but to put it away. He saves us from it, and we may well thank Him for such a great salvation.

Of course Jesus himself taught us that we are to live without sinning. He told the impotent man that He healed (fifth chapter of John) to "sin no more." Would He make this statement if it were not possible to carry through? Look at Jesus' words: "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). On another occasion He made this statement: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11). Paul argued, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12).

God's commands are His enablings. He is consistent. He does not ask us to do the impossible. What He promised, He is able also to perform. What He asks us to do, He furnishes the power for us to do it. He delights not only to save a soul, but to give him the ability to go on living a new and wonderful life.

Gypsy Smith once said, "Tell me how God got the song from the seraph and robed it in feathers, and you have the canary. Tell me then how Jesus came to me in my Gypsy tent. Oh, it is such a mystery to me! When there was no Bible, when I could not spell my name, when I was only a little wandering Gypsy boy, without God and without hope in the world, tell me how Jesus came to that old Gypsy tent, opened my eyes, and made me know He was my Saviour and my Lord. Tell me how, for I do not know. But I know that He did it." [2]

The idea that we may be brought to the place where the sin business is finished in our lives ought to make every heart rejoice. Ministers should find this a stirring reason for mounting the pulpit to proclaim the truth of deliverance. We rejoice in discoveries of wonder drugs, and the cures and preventatives for pneumonia and other once-dreaded diseases. We laud to the skies a skilled surgeon who can operate on a heart, even replace one, and prolong the life of the patient. But how much more should we talk about a Saviour who has the power to save a soul, cleanse the heart from sin, and then keep that man unspotted every day of the year, and every hour of the day.

This is John's theme for this whole letter, "that ye may not once sin"!

A summary of this may be seen in these thoughts:

1. "He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the sinner free."
2. Jesus so cleanses the heart that sin is no longer resident in the soul.
3. This great salvation is adequate to keep one from sin after being saved out of it.
4. It is as easy for God to keep as to give a moment's deliverance.
5. Christians may look forward with the hope and assurance of being sustained in the experience they have received.
6. Be thankful, Christian, that you do not have to repent every night.
7. Christians may rejoice because the bondage to sin is broken, and they are free indeed.
8. Only the Christian can keep such commandments as: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col. 2:6).
9. The Christian testimony becomes one of optimism, telling of overcoming, not of failure.
10. We may all rejoice in the consolation of a Christ who can do this for us all.

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05 -- OVERCOMING IN YOUTH

John beams his message to all age levels. In the second chapter of his First Epistle he is writing to "little children," to "young men," and to "fathers." Some believe that these refer to levels of spiritual maturity, not physical development. Even so, there is the assurance of victory for all in John's message of encouragement.

Here are his two statements to young men:

"I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one" (2:13).

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (2:14).

Commenting on this passage, Daniel Steele says: "The perfect tense implies past triumph continuing to the present time. The true Christian is always young. He has the habit of victory... and each successive victory makes him stronger for the next conflict." [3]

Dean Afford in his monumental commentary on the Greek text makes this statement: "The wicked one is he in whom, and in whose power the whole world lieth..."

"He is a conquered foe -- once for all, by those who have passed 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Whatever conflict remains for them afterwards is with a baffled and conquered enemy." [4]

These young men had reached a place of real victory in their lives. There was a dying out. There was a reaching out. There was a laying hold on. There was a continuation of that which they had received. The tense used here in both of these scripture statements -- the perfect tense -- means that what they had received they had kept. What had happened to them at the point of their commitment to Christ was still happening. They were still maintaining this spiritual relationship. They still had the victory at this writing. There were abiding results; the fruit remained. A. T. Robertson refers to it as "a permanent victory after conflict."

Commentators see no particular significance in the change of tenses of the time of writing. In verses 12 and 13 of chapter 2, John uses "I write," and in verse 14 "I have written." Robertson thinks John was interrupted at verse 13, and that later he began with verse 14 and merely took up where he left off. Afford regards John's words, "I have written," to imply that this is to be regarded as his permanent testimony, and that he has nothing further to say at this point. In any case, the essential meaning is the same. These young men had overcome. The perfect tense does bring out the meaning, "Ye have gained an abiding victory over the wicked one."

There is a lot in the Bible about overcoming. The term is used in connection with the defeat of enemy armies. Pharaoh's hosts were overcome by the Red Sea, and Moses and the Israelites had a time of rejoicing on the shore. All of the armies that came out against Joshua were overcome.

There are seven "overcomeths" in the first three chapters of Revelation. And the saints have yet to "tell the story, how we've overcome." There is victory for every one of God's children in their conflict with the foe.

When many young people today are being engulfed in the tide of sin, there are still those who have found the better way. They are overcomers, victors, happy followers of the Lord. Overcoming young men -- what an inspiring thought!

A large skyscraper was under construction and high up on the skeleton of the upper stories men were guiding the steel beams into position as they were hoisted up by the crane. As many people watched far below, a large steel beam being lifted up began to tilt as it neared the top. A

workman leaned far out of the structure to try to level it. In doing so, he lost his grip on the building, and had to seize the beam in order to save his own life. His weight now added to one end of this massive piece caused it to become even more out of balance. But another workman at a still higher level saw the situation and reached out and seized the other end and climbed onto it. In doing this the two men were able to bring about a proper balance and both were brought to safety.

Young people every day are losing their balance in this topsy-turvy world. They need someone to come to their aid and help restore their equilibrium. We are thankful for those who are helping to hold a steady hand on the life of the church, the school, and the community. May their number increase!

Few people know the name of Ann Haseltine. She was a young, popular socialite in New England many years ago. But she received a wonderful experience of grace in her heart and heard God's call to Christian service. Fourteen days after her marriage, she and her young husband sailed to a foreign land to give their lives in sacrifice and service as missionaries. The history of these two dedicated people is now well-known. For Ann Haseltine married Adoniram Judson, and they went to Burma and literally burned out their lives for God. They labored six years before they saw a single convert, but when Judson died, there were 63 churches and 7,000 converts.

Young people, you can be overcomers!

1. You can overcome the devil himself by resisting his overtures.
2. You can overcome the allurements of the world by taking into your heart the One who makes you more than conqueror.
3. You can overcome the temptations that make such easy inroads into the emotions and senses of those who have never yet been really anchored.
4. You can overcome the social pressures that enslave young people and drag them into worldly behavior.
5. You can overcome the world, and all that is implied by that term -- its customs, habits, and mores.
6. You can overcome and alter the status quo. One man said he understood this to be Latin for "the mess we're in." But Webster says it is "the existing state of affairs at any specified time." Christ will have us to demonstrate something better than we see demonstrated at the present time all around us.
7. You can overcome the fear of being odd or a "square." This is a tough hurdle to be overcome. It is a battleground for the young man or woman who would like to have influence and friends but, also, would like to remain spiritual. It has been proved over and over that if you will take Christ's way, and not compromise, instead of that fact hurting you, it will prove a great benefit in the long run. Furthermore, it will often influence your classmates to become true Christians themselves.

8. You can overcome the urge to "have a thrill." People today will do almost anything to get a thrill. The trouble is, they are seeking it in the wrong direction. But the real thrill is in being truly born again, made anew, and knowing that the Holy Spirit has really taken over in your life. There is a thrill in winning some other person to Christ, and in knowing day by day that you are in the center of the will of God.

9. You can overcome revolutionary tendencies -- the pressure to break away from the framework of society and venture into the philosophy of the so-called "new morality." The Holy Spirit will help you to see the fallacy of such behavior, which really is not "new" at all.

10. Finally, you can overcome when faced with the emergencies of life. God has said: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

High in the Himalayan Mountains a relay system has been worked out for passing messages from one valley to another. A man in the valley will call his message out. Soon a faint reply will come from a man high up on the mountain, who will in turn call the message farther up or else over the ridge to the adjacent valley.

How important is the role of the relay man! God wants us to pass on the message. He wants us to stand between and help the man below get in contact with the one farther up. Many will never make contact unless we are there with the relay.

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06 -- THE ANOINTING

Those involved in Christian service realize the importance of spiritual anointing. The preacher prays that he will be anointed for the sermon. The gospel singer prays that the Spirit will rest upon him as he sings. As Christians, we often pray for a fresh anointing on our hearts. John also calls it "unction." In fact in the original the same word is used for both "anointing" and "unction." By the way, the word "unction" appears only one time in the King James Version, and it is in this passage we are studying.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (2:20).

The companion verse that we wish to study with this one is:

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (2:27).

The one word in the original that is translated both "unction" and "anointing" is the word charisma.

Our word "Christ" comes from the word "to anoint" and, technically, we have the "Christos," the "Anointed One." An important illustration of this is a verse in Acts, where we read: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10: 38).

Both kings and prophets were anointed as they were placed in their offices. The meaning of this anointing is: "To anoint by way of instituting to a dignity, and function for privileges. The reception of spiritual privileges."

Where John says, "Ye know all things," Daniel Steele thinks this may be simplified to "Ye all know the truth." He believes that by having the Holy Spirit in our hearts we will not be deceived concerning any false teachings. Remember what Jesus said about the Comforter, that He would guide us into all truth.

The Holy Spirit is the great Revealer. How different things are to us after He is come! We are no longer taken up with the "letter" that "killeth" but the "Spirit" that "giveth life." When one is used to an anointed ministry, it is hard for him to get interested in going out to hear some preacher, no matter what his reputation, who is not so "fired up" by the Holy Spirit. Someone has said, "No one has heard the gospel preached until he has heard it preached with unction."

The comment was often made concerning Jesus' preaching that much anointing was upon Him. When He had finished His Sermon on the Mount, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29).

One of the newer metals is called Permalloy. It is highly sensitive to magnetic influence under certain circumstances. When lying crossways of the magnetic lines of the earth, it has no magnetic power. When, however, it is placed in direct line with the magnetic lines, its power is strong.

We need to line ourselves up with the magnetic pull of the Holy Spirit. We need this in teaching our Sunday school classes. We need it when we lead the juniors on Sunday nights. We need it in the young people's program and activities. We need it in counseling at the youth camp. We need it when we sing a solo in the church service or play an instrument. We need this unction when we deal with an individual in personal soul winning. In fact, there is no area of Christian service but what we need this anointing from on high.

This has been the driving force in the lives of missionaries, and has thrust them out to the ends of the earth. When Esther Carson Winans was returning the second time to Peru, Dr. J. B. Chapman said to her, "Sister Winans, I hate to see you go. The sacrifice is too great. You will be nine days on mule-back from a hospital, and think what that will mean."

"Do you call it sacrifice," asked the missionary, "when you are doing the one thing above all else in the world that you would rather do?"

To this Dr. Chapman replied, "If you put it that way, it isn't sacrifice." And then he added: "As you go, I give you my blessing to attend you."

She did go back, but it was her last trip to that lonely part of the world. She made the supreme sacrifice.

Dr. Chapman later visited this mission station on the headwaters of the Amazon, and saw the grave of the missionary. While he preached to the native congregation, the old chief who first opposed Mrs. Winans' coming raised his hand for prayer, and was converted in that very service.

A talented, young musician with a very profound Christian experience was organist for his small church and enjoyed playing for the glory of God. His abilities were well-known in the town, and once when the regular performer of a popular radio program was away, this Christian young man was asked to fill in. He did with pleasure, and performed so well that he received high praise from the station manager.

Shortly afterwards the lady who had this spot, for which she received \$100 for the one-hour program each week, resigned and left the city. This young man was offered the place. But he asked the manager. "What type of music will I be expected to play?" The reply was, "This is a command performance. You will be expected to play whatever people call in and ask for."

"Then I can't accept it," the young man replied. "My talent is not for sale." His convictions were stronger than the appeal for money.

We need to keep the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon us for times like these. It is possible for every Christian to do so. Let us live and pray and walk where this "dew of the Lord" shall rest upon us.

1. The anointing means the difference between people seeing in us the letter of the Word, and the Spirit.
2. The anointing means that others will see in our ministry something that is different from mechanical performance.
3. The anointing means that we are in touch with the Holy Spirit, and that He is operating through us. It is not something that we can put on ourselves.
4. The anointing means that God is able to work through us, as human instruments, to bless those we contact for Him. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. 4:7).
5. The anointing means that there is spirit and there is life in the Word of God as it is sounded forth through us.
6. The anointing means that the Holy Spirit is actually clothing our speech and our song with His own power, and working out His purposes through us.

7. The anointing means that our human talents, humbly presented to God, can be directed and used for His glory.

8. The anointing means that the smallest caliber person in the Kingdom can be mightily used of the Lord. In fact, God does often use the limited person more than the one who is bristling with talent simply because the former may have the greater measure of anointing.

9. To have this anointing, we must be sure we are fully under the Spirit's control.

10. The anointing comes as we humble ourselves truly in the sight of the Lord and allow Him to fit us into His kingdom program.

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07 -- ERADICATION -- POSSIBLE OR NOT?

Every religion, every denomination, every theologian, and every Christian, sooner or later must grapple with the problem of man's sinful nature. Why do we have this nature? Can we get rid of it? Did the atonement make provision for its removal in this life? Can it only be suppressed? Is it counteracted? Is it eradicated? If it is removed, can it ever come back? If it is removed, then does it mean that Christians can't sin? These questions are raised often, and we find a wide range of answers.

A person's belief in a matter like this is often colored by what he has been taught early in life. It depends on the kind of preaching he has heard. But has he really heard the truth? If he has learned the Bible truth about it, he is fortunate indeed.

John gives us here a clear outline of this sin principle. Men like the scholarly Dean Alford affirm that John is talking about two different things when he speaks of forgiveness and cleansing. Any scholarly treatment of these terms reveals that something is being done for the sins we have committed, and something also is being done for the sinful nature itself. We have noted earlier the distinction made between forgiveness and cleansing. The one has to do with sins committed, the other with the sin nature.

Many people seem to object to the term eradication. But what else does cleansing mean if it does not mean to eradicate? What else could "all" mean, if anything were left from that which is taken away? The verse we would study just now is this:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil... For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (3:8).

Let's look at the word eradicate. The dictionary says: "To pull up by the roots; to destroy at the roots; to root out; to extirpate; as, to eradicate weeds. To destroy thoroughly; to get rid of; to wipe out." That sounds quite thorough, doesn't it?

John is following through with his victorious line of thought all through his Epistle. In the first chapter he came right to grips with sin in both forms, and showed us that the remedy had been provided. Here in the above-mentioned verse he uses one of the strongest words in his vocabulary to express his meaning. He could have used some lighter words if he had meant something else. But he uses a word which does correspond to the idea we have quoted from the dictionary. The word in the original Greek here for "destroy" is the word *loose*, and the tense is the aorist, which means it is a complete happening. The lexicons will bear out this meaning: "To loosen, unbind, dissolve, break up, destroy, annul, cancel, demolish, to make void, to nullify."

These are no soft words!

Paul uses one other strong Greek word in this connection as found in Romans 6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

The word for "destroyed" Paul uses here is the word "katargethe," and it carries with it just as strong a list of total terms as the other word we have just noted. Dr. Greathouse in Beacon Bible Commentary uses the translation "extirpated."

Both men are talking about the same thing. They are both dealing with the carnal nature. They both use the two strongest words in all the Greek vocabulary to express what they mean. They both use the complete, all-at-once tense, the aorist. This of course means that in one complete operation the sinful, carnal nature can be somehow so dealt with that it is no longer there to be operative. Paul uses a deathblow term. John uses the same terminology with the expression of cleansing added. Why attempt to soften the meanings?

Scholarly men have tried to explain away the matter of eradication. When one such author tried to explain I John 2:1 ("My little children... I write unto you, that ye sin not"), he could only say, "This just simply isn't so. Christians do sin." Then he went on to try to show how we must make room for the fact that we are still all sinners, in that we do sin every day.

Are we guilty of prejudice (as some say we are) when we take the positive view here, and believe that we can be cleansed from all of the sin nature? The term "prejudiced" means "rendering the verdict before the evidence is all in." But we already have the evidence -- the words of the New Testament and the testimonies of those who have experienced this change within their hearts. How wonderful that the plan of salvation makes this possible!

Here then are some thoughts on eradication:

1. It means that God gets the glory. We do not do this ourselves.
2. It means that what was wrought in our hearts because of the sin of the first Adam, our Second Adam is able to completely undo or reverse.
3. It means that the disease of sin can be completely purged from our inmost being.

4. Eradication means that God planned a fully victorious life for His children here and now.

5. Eradication means that we have a Great Physician who can make His clients whole.

6. It means that righteousness and holiness can be restored to us, in spite of the limitations of our infirmities.

7. Eradication means that God plans to give us not only the right to heaven here, but the fitness as well.

8. Eradication means that through the work of the Holy Spirit we are able to witness to a wholeness and completeness in the sanctified heart.

9. Eradication means that our fight with sin and temptation is now on the outside and not on the inside as well.

10. Eradication means that holy people are enabled to serve the Lord "in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:75).

* * * * *

08 -- WHAT IF WE COULD NOT SIN?

If we are kept from committing sin in our daily lives, it is because of the change that has taken place within us. This change must be more than a historical event; it must be a continuing experience if we are to be able to keep on living the new life we have received.

John explains it in this verse:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (3:9).

This is a strong verse, and makes an emphatic statement. There is no reading of it in the original that will tone it down. It means just what it says in both Greek and English. If we were to expand it in the Greek, and bring out the meaning of the tenses, it would read something like this: "Whosoever is in a born-again experience ['born again' is in the perfect tense, and means that he is sustained in this experience] doth not go on committing sins, because there is the power of a seed principle of spiritual life that remains in him, so that he cannot go on sinning, because he is sustained in his born-again experience."

The perfect tense is used both times in this verse for "born again," which means that the Christian is sustained in this spiritual relationship. This tense is used often in the New Testament to show how a condition is maintained in our lives. The simple meaning of the perfect tense is that whatever condition the speaker is telling about is something that has already taken place and is still holding. Pilate used this expression when he referred to the superscription put on the cross of

Jesus. He said: "What I have written I have written." It will remain. The record stands! Jesus used it when He answered the devil in the great temptation, "It is written." The record remains unchanged.

The word "seed" which John uses here is rich in meaning. The Greek word is "sperma". According to the best lexicographers it means "a principle of spiritual life; the beginning or germ of a new life; the grace that dwells in the one who is born of God."

So that which sustains a Christian in his experience is the "power" or "authority" or grace that Christ gives to as many as receive Him (cf. John 1:12).

Evangelical Christians have been accused of bragging because they tell of their part of the transaction by which they are saved. But they are not spiritually proud. Invariably they give God the glory, for it is by grace alone we are saved. The critics say that one is boasting if he claims to live above sin, but the clear meaning of this verse is that those who have truly been born again are able to go on living this life by a power not their own, but through the strength that God has placed within them.

Being kept, however, is not automatic. It is far from this. A believer must watch and pray, and make a full-time job of serving the Lord. He must be like the man who testified that his business was serving the Lord, but that he drove an oil truck to pay expenses.

A man who had been converted on Sunday from a life of drink was dreading going to work on Monday morning. He feared that, being in the atmosphere of other sinful men, he would not be able to hold out. As he went to work on this first morning of the new week, he was praying for the Lord to help him not to drink. He decided the best way to do it was to live this new life one hour at a time. If he could make it for one hour, he could make it for two, and so on.

Later that week a man came into his office, and while sitting and talking noticed a lot of straight marks on the calendar on the wall. He inquired about this. The saved man said. "I was converted last Sunday night. I have prayed every hour on the hour for the Lord not to let me fall. Every hour I make it, I put a mark on the calendar for that day." There on the wall was the evidence that he had been kept, hour after hour.

So John says, "His seed remaineth in him." Evidently God planned to support what He had begun in the soul. Why should it seem incredible for God to sustain what He has wrought? Why could not the same God who saves us keep us saved? What's so impossible about that? We find Him busy sustaining other parts of His creation. His orderly universe runs like clockwork. The sun rises each day with predictable regularity. Why then should it be thought impossible for our God, once He has stamped His own image on the soul, to be able to keep it there? He who made the world, piled up the mountains, scooped out the oceans, filled the skies with heavenly bodies, and made everything that was ever made is able to keep a person saved from his sins. All He needs is a continual commitment on the part of the Christian.

This principle of spiritual life within us means these things:

1. It is God's plan for keeping what He has already wrought in the heart.
2. It means that God gets the glory for our sustained walk with Him.
3. It is just as easy for us to be kept in our Christian experience as it was to be brought into it in the first place.
4. It gives confidence to the child of God that it is not necessary to go on sinning every day of his life -- or any day for that matter.
5. It demonstrates our Lord's desire to cooperate with us in our spiritual enablings.
6. It makes the Christian life consistent in that we are able to live up to the name.
7. It remains in us, and can be counted on for all of the tomorrows of our lives just so long as we do our part in maintaining a right relationship with God.
8. It encourages the child of God to know that "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ."
9. It keeps us from committing sins, and enables us to live victoriously every day.
10. It is our strong confidence in God as we walk with Him from day to day.

* * * * *

09 -- WE KNOW WE KNOW

John likes to say, "We know," and he has some firm reasons for such confidence. In the first place, he is using a word which in the original means something more than intellectual knowledge. In this Epistle he uses for the most part a word which in the Greek stands for "inner spiritual knowledge." A study of these two kinds of knowledge throughout the New Testament is a very rewarding experience. When the demon cried out at Jesus and said: "I know thee who thou art," the stronger word for knowing was not used, but one that means merely identification. The unclean spirits could pick out Jesus from the crowd. But though they knew who He was, they could never say, "We know," in the sense that we believers do.

Here are some of the statements from I John where we have the stronger word used, and they form a wonderful basis for us in the support of our faith and our testimony.

1. We know that we are of the truth (3:19).

So many people are confused these days! Recently an Australian businessman asked me, "How can I know what religion is right when there are so many different kinds?" The question is an old one, but very real. I pointed out that different emphases were made by different groups and we would like to think that many of them fundamentally seek to do the will of God. I tried to make

an illustration out of the fact that, when he went along with a group of other businessmen to a meeting, he might be wearing a certain color suit, or style of neck gear, and others would be dressed differently, but the purpose of all was the same. This is not to say that it makes no difference what denomination one follows. There are false teachers always. But we can know if we line up a church's doctrine against the Bible, which is the Source of all truth.

2. We know he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (3:24).

This statement makes it clear that one's knowing is basically shut up within one's own heart. We may never be able to fully explain the sense of assurance, but it is so clear that we are willing to risk our eternal destiny on the strength of it. We know, we know!

A teen-age girl confiding in an older woman wanted to know how she could know when she was really in love. The more experienced friend replied: "Joan, you'll know!" This was obviously over-simplified, yet it illustrates our spiritual truth. We can really know that we belong to Christ.

More and more in recent years I have been preaching to people that you can know spiritual things better than you can know your own name. Bertha Munro points out that one's name is only a sound, and has meaning only as he fills it in with something. So, really, what we know about our own names is what others have told us. So we have to take somebody's word for it. But when it comes to our spiritual experience, God himself gives us the witness.

John uses this higher word for knowing 23 times in this short Epistle. Most of the times it is in the present tense, showing that it is something to be constantly enjoyed. Six times he uses it in the perfect tense, which means he has been enjoying this experience for some time, and that it is holding good right now.

3. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (4:6).

There has perhaps never been a time in the church age when it was more difficult to know our way through the maze of different interpretations and different emphases of scripture statements. The very fact that many of the unorthodox groups do incorporate a lot of Bible in their teachings makes it all the more difficult for the average person to know what is right and what is wrong.

Can you know if a doctrine is right or wrong? The answer is, "Yes!" and there are a number of tests that can be applied to find out.

- a. The test of Scripture
- b. The inner assurance
- c. The test of time

There are 549 times, in the New Testament alone, that the words "know," "known," and "knowest" are used. This old Book is a Book of assurance. Nothing else is so precious as a real knowledge of the Lord.

4. We do know that we know him (2:3).

There is something mysterious, mystical, and wonderful about this sense of assurance.

Words are inadequate to fully describe it. Only those who have experienced it can know the satisfaction that divine assurance brings.

There are a lot of things that work for us that we can't explain. The average housewife would not be able to stand at her refrigerator door and give a lecture as to just what is taking place inside. She doesn't really worry about it. She knows that it gets cold enough to keep milk and foods preserved, and that in the freezer section it gets cold enough to make ice. She knows it works for her, and that is the big thing.

John, we believe, is writing out of a longtime experience with his Lord. It seems as natural as breathing for him to speak in such terms of assurance. He has seen enough from his associations with the Son of God that from deep within him is flowing a river of assurance and blessing.

Fanny Crosby's famous hymn, "Blessed Assurance" voices a great experience for the Christian. She shows us what we may all understand and possess where there is "perfect submission."

Assurance is taught by precept and example all through the Bible. It is as clear in the Old Testament as the New. The writer of the Hebrews goes into detail to tell how men were "moved with fear" and "went out" by faith. Exploits of both women and men are described in the roster of the heroes of faith.

Men have risked their eternal destiny on this factor of assurance. Spiritual things have been as real to them as life itself. The saints have been as convinced of their homegoing to be with God as they have of anything else. In fact, a study of the obituaries of Bible characters is a very rewarding experience. No child of God should really worry about death.

Being around saints that are "ripe" for heaven helps our faith. One elderly couple who had been on the way a long time, and had spent their lives in the service of their King, always lightened up when they talked about heaven. There seemed to be a little jealousy, if it could be called that, as to which one of them would be honored in going first.

A wealthy rancher had a hired hand that had been with him for years, and with whom he had close fellowship. He would often talk over with him the plans for his sales of cattle or his trips to the big city. After the death of the rich man a minister was one day talking with the hired man, and suggested that his old master must now be in heaven. "No, Sir," said the man, "I don't believe he went there." "You don't?" inquired the preacher. "I believed he was a mighty good man, and I trust he is at rest up there."

"Well, you see," said the man, "whenever the boss planned any big trip, he always got excited about it, and would talk about it lots ahead of time. But I never heard him say anything about making a trip to heaven. No, Sir, I don't think he went there."

But assurance to the saints that they are on their way to heaven is a great joy. This is something we can all know -- and get excited about!

When Dr. John G. Paton was translating the New Testament into the island language of the New Hebrides, he found difficulty in locating a native word for faith.

While he was in his study one day, deep at work on the translation, one of his native teachers came in hot and exhausted after a long walk. He threw himself down on the cane chair, put his feet up on another, and wiping his forehead, he used a word which meant, "I'm resting my whole weight here." Instantly Dr. Paton had the word he wanted.

It is true, we can rest our whole weight on God, day after day. This is our invisible means of support and the ground of our assurance.

Here are some practical statements about our knowing:

1. We can know that the Holy Spirit has convicted us of our sins. This is the beginning stage of ultimate Christian experience.

2. We can know that we have been forgiven of every sin we have ever committed. We can know that they are all washed away.

3. We can know that we have passed from "death unto life." As we look back, we can see where we were "dead in trespasses and sins." And as we look forward, we can see the heavenly goal.

4. We can know that we are on "praying ground," where faith can take hold of the promises of God. We can have an assurance that we have the right "petitions that we desired of him."

5. We can know that we have met the conditions for answered prayer that He requires. The Holy Spirit is faithful here, before and after.

6. We can know that His Spirit abides within us. We do not need any other evidence but His own presence. "The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us."

7. We can know that we are abiding in Him. We learn by practical experience that as we walk in the light, and keep fulfilling the conditions that brought us into His favor, everything is still all right.

8. We can know that, if we were to die right now, we would be ready for heaven.

9. We can know that we are keeping "his commandments" and are doing "those things that are pleasing in his sight."

10. We can know the inexpressible calm and peace that come from established faith -- we can "know that we know."

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10 -- LOVE MADE PERFECT

In the fourth chapter of I John we have a very thorough study of the subject of perfect love. In fact this is the only place in the Bible where we find this term used. We have perfection mentioned in many places, but only here do we have perfect love. And we have it four times in this one chapter:

"And his love is perfected in us (4:12). Herein is our love made perfect (4:17). Perfect love casteth out fear" (4:18).

"He that heareth is not made perfect in love" (4:18).

In three of these expressions above, the perfect tense is used. This means that we are upheld and sustained in this experience. The passive voice is also used three times, so that it is something that is happening to us. It is not something we do, but what God does, and so He gets the credit, not us.

We need to be reminded that, when we speak of perfection in relation to ourselves, it is not absolute. That is, it is not as full-orbed as it would be in God. We may illustrate the difference between the idea of the relative and the absolute by a little child just learning to walk. The child lets go of the father's hands, and goes falteringly toward the mother only a few feet away. Gradually the distance is widened and maybe eight or 10 or a dozen steps are taken. "The baby is walking," the proud parents report. She did not walk as perfectly as she will 10 years later, or 20, but she did walk perfectly for a child of her age. She did the kind of walking a child is expected to do who is taking her very first steps alone, but improvement will come with practice.

A mature saint can look back and see how his spiritual steps have improved across the years. It is easy to forget just how long it took us to learn to walk as we do now, and to become impatient with the "babes in Christ." It is good to know that God plans an experience for us in which our love is freed from the things that hinder it.

John points out the negative aspect of perfect love, namely, the purging away of the sinful nature. The things that would hinder love from being perfect are taken away. What a relief to be rid of the carnal nature, that so often rose up to defeat us! So often when we have wanted to be good, this enemy within has asserted itself and foiled our resolutions and our efforts. Now we have the joy of a love reigning in our hearts without a rival. This is the privilege of every child of God. This is God's plan. This is God's standard.

John says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." Fear has been defined as: "alarm," "fright," "feelings of anxiety," "to be afraid lest something should happen," "to be afraid to do something." Paul tells us: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear" (Rom. 8:15).

This fear is paralyzing. It holds one back. It makes one afraid to go on. It cancels out one's striking power. It restrains and hinders one in many ways.

John says, too, that this fear "hath torment." This word also means "punishment." In fact, this is the primary meaning of the word as it is used here. In this context it carries with it the idea "to curtail," "to coerce," "to chastise," and "to punish."

John has strong reasons why the "children" he is writing to should have an experience like the one that has stood the test for him across the years. It is an all-out, victorious experience that makes living for the Lord rewarding and rich.

Since love is the very heart of our religion, we do well to study the perfection of it. John Wesley liked to use this term "perfect love" to express the deep meaning of sanctification. Since love lasts longer, and abides after all else is gone, it takes on peculiar significance.

John Wesley testifies:

"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 how 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." [5]

While Wesley did not refer often to his personal spiritual experience, he does give here a clear statement about what had happened in his own life.

When the Panama Canal was nearing completion, it was noticed that landslides were still occurring. "When will the banks cease their sliding?" the project engineer was asked. His reply was, "When they have reached their angle of repose."

When a born-again Christian enters the Canaan Land of perfect love, he reaches this state of inner repose and abiding peace.

Perfect love, then, is at the very heart of all we understand entire sanctification and holiness to be. It is a scriptural way of expressing this grace. It is reassuring to see a cherished doctrine so thoroughly supported in the original language of the Bible.

The Greek word "teleioo" carries with it the idea "to execute fully, to make complete, to finish." This is illustrated in these verses (italics mine): "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). There is a sequel to this statement

in the last prayer Jesus prayed with His disciples when He said: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). His was a completed task, a finished redemption.

The same root word in the Greek carries with it the idea "to perfect, to consummate, to bring to perfection." An example of this is: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Here in one verse we see tied together "Christian perfection" and "sanctification." This relationship is basic in understanding the doctrine of holiness.

Perfection, as to official character, is also included, as is brought out in these verses: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things... to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Also, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

This same Greek word for perfection is used in Heb. 9:9 and 10:1 to show how the "gifts and sacrifices" under the law were unable to bring about the perfection of the worshippers.

God's Word also makes clear to us how we may be fully developed in spiritual character and made perfect in love. The references above have to do more with the idea of completeness, and something that is full-grown. The development aspect is brought out in the following: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). The implication is that God's power is most efficacious in those that are weak but who have the potential for developing strength. There is a ripening of character, the ability to use the things that seem to be against us to further the process of God's planning in our lives.

This experience is not merely held up for us to look at as an ideal toward which to strive but is realizable here and now. Listen to Paul: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil. 3:15).

The derivative objective "teleiotes" describes this experience in these terms: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1). This is held out as a goal for every Christian to strive for and, thank God, obtain.

Paul exhorted one church in these words: "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

There is just as strong support for this victorious experience in a study of the words "to sanctify" and "to purify." John Wesley tells about publishing in 1741 the second volume of hymns which he and his brother Charles had written. He explains that the doctrine of perfect love was still much misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented, so he judged it needful to explain it in a rather lengthy preface. Here is a pertinent excerpt:

"This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the image of God fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of Him that created them.

"God hath now laid "the ax unto the root of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith," and cleansing all the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. Having this hope, that they shall see God as He is, they 'purify themselves even as He is pure.'

"Not that they have already attained all that they shall attain, either are already in this sense perfect. But they daily go on from strength to strength; beholding now, 'as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.'" [6]

Under the title of "The Divine Crescendo," W. W. Clay wrote the following:

"The word 'crescendo' is a word musicians use to describe the increase of a tone in strength and volume. The Bible nowhere intimates that the experience of the infilling of the Holy Spirit that purifies the heart is the peak of Christian experience. Instead, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day' (Prov. 4:18).

"John Fletcher, companion of John Wesley, was known as perhaps the saintliest man of that day. He taught that there was no limit in this life to the increase of the divine infilling of the Spirit. Fletcher's devotion to God, his zeal for the salvation of the lost, his hunger and thirst after God, his humility and love for others constantly increased to the day of his death." [7]

Perfect love for the Christian means these things:

1. Perfect love in the heart of the believer is wrought by the sanctifying Spirit.
2. Perfect love is God's answer to the cry for completeness and satisfaction in the depth of the soul.
3. Perfect love makes the Christian life more enjoyable and victorious.
4. Perfect love enables the Christian to be more steady in his experience; in fact, it is an establishing grace.
5. Perfect love helps the earnest soul over many difficult places, for he does not have to contend with the carnal nature anymore.
6. Perfect love makes constant contact with our Lord a normal experience, so that we are saved from a vacillating condition, spiritually.
7. Perfect love enables one to grow in grace more easily. The greatest hindrance to spiritual progress is the carnal nature. When this enemy is put out, there can be a more normal progress in the things of God.
8. Perfect love sheds abroad in our hearts the very nature of God. This is done through the agency of the Holy Spirit.
9. Perfect love gives a restful relationship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

10. Perfect love enables the Christian to fulfill the law in loving his neighbor as himself.

* * * * *

11 -- THIS IS THE VICTORY!

While victory for the Christian is written large in the whole Epistle of I John, it is brought out in bold type in the following verses:

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (5:4-5)

This parent word used both for "overcoming" and "victory" is, in the Greek, "nikao". We get our word Nicholas from this, which means "the conqueror of the people."

This word carries with it strong meaning. The lexicons support the idea of it meaning "to prevail," "to conquer in battle," "overcome," "vanquish," and "subdue."

Jesus used this same word when He said: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It has been pointed out that when Jesus spoke of the "world" here, it meant "the sum total of everything opposed to God."

This conquering word is used 31 times in the New Testament, and carries with it always the aroma of victory, and makes one feel encouraged in reading each verse where the word appears. We find it mostly in Revelation, where it is associated with the "overcomers." This is seen especially in chapters 2 and 3. The last place in the Bible where this word is used is in this statement: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7).

John had already used this word in writing to "young men" as pointed out in the second chapter.

Paul's outstanding use of this word is probably in this verse: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom, 12:21).

There is a battle in life. It isn't altogether easy to be good. Satan opposes everyone who puts on the gospel armor. He contends every step we take. He is our enemy and adversary. About the only good thing that could ever be said about him is that he "works at the job."

Devout Christians learn about spiritual conflicts, and young Christians need to be informed that it isn't at all strange that they are going through a "fiery trial."

It is encouraging to know that "the same afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The pages of the Bible are filled with stories of those who came through all right. The ancient heroes fill us with courage and faith as we see them coming to grips with the foe and overcoming in the battle.

In about the first war mentioned in the Bible, Moses held up his hands and his armies prevailed against Amalek.

Joshua subdued the enemies in the land of Canaan, and "the land rested from war."

The shy and modest Gideon proved the Lord before he went into battle. As his small group of men stood in their places, they saw the enemy flee in terror, and God gave a mighty victory.

Jonathan felt the Lord was not limited to numbers, and he and his armor-bearer alone challenged the Philistines. Their fearless action turned the tide of battle that day.

Shamgar was met by 1,000 Philistines, and the divine record tells how he won the complete victory single-handedly with only an oxgoad for a weapon.

God made a way for Samson, and when the enemy was closing in on him, he took up the gates and gate posts and made his escape.

There are many others in the Bible who overcame in their battles and won mighty victories. So we today are winning out in our battles through divine enablement. Young people are overcoming the tides of sin and are getting their feet down on solid foundations.

God's plan calls for victory for all of His children. No matter how great the odds against us may be, we can still be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." The secret of victory is to be sure we are in right relationship with Him. We dare not gaze too long at our enemies, but run our race "looking unto Jesus."

1. We can overcome because we are hacked by a Saviour who is more than a match for our enemy.

2. We can overcome because everything necessary for our victory has been provided.

3. We can overcome because we can always know that the enemy will make things seem worse than they really are. He is a master deceiver.

4. We can overcome because "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4).

5. We can overcome because nothing can stand before a real faith. "For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

6. We can overcome because our enemies are spiritual enemies, and the Holy Spirit given to us is greater than any combination of such forces arrayed against us.

7. We can overcome because we are surrounded by "exceeding great and precious promises" and we find in them all we need for victory.

8. We can overcome because "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (II Cor. 10:4).

9. We can overcome because we can plead the Word, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

10. We can overcome because those who have gone before have proved it possible. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11). This is the formula for victory.

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12 -- DIAGNOSIS -- KNOWING US THROUGH

The word diagnosis is a compound word in Greek which comes from the words "to know" and the preposition "through." So when our physician diagnoses our case, he literally, "knows us through." We appreciate this, for it is difficult for us sometimes to know what ails us. It takes objectivity and training to analyze a person's true condition, and we need one who specializes in this field to determine our case, so we will know what our trouble really is.

The word for "diagnosis" and the word translated "condemn" are closely related. Note the use of the latter in I John:

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (3:20-21).

The word for "condemn" comes from a big word which means "to perceive something of someone." It is used mostly with discerning something against someone, hence the translation "condemn." The word literally means "to look one through and through; to know him thoroughly."

Going back to the word "diagnosis," we find it used when conspirators are trying to seize Paul: "As though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him" (Acts 23:15). And in the next chapter, "When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter" (Acts 24:22; *italics mine*).

Some of us have had the experience of being "looked through" by a physician using various X-ray techniques. Man is able to make machines by means of which he can know us through and through physically, but the Holy Spirit needs no devices by which to determine what we are spiritually.

Condemnation is closely allied with conscience. They work together. In fact, it would be hard to tell where the one ends and the other begins. The Holy Spirit uses these two avenues to reveal to a person his true condition. This is the basis of what we call "conviction for sin," which makes one aware of his spiritual need and urges decision to do something about it.

Condemnation in the spiritual realm acts quite like temperature does in the body. Normally our temperature should be 98.4 degrees. But when there is a disorder or infection in the body, usually there is an elevation of the body temperature. Almost the first thing we do when we feel ill is to have our temperature taken. This is a fairly reliable indicator of physical disorder. The temperature chart for each patient in the hospital is an important bit of information. Condemnation is an indicator of spiritual disorder in the same way.

Conscience does not always condemn. There is such a thing as a good conscience. We can live at a level above guilt, where conscience witnesses in a good way to us, giving us peace of mind and heart.

Condemnation settles down like a dark cloud. It makes one ill at ease. Often the pressure of conviction makes one act his worst. His heart is "knowing him through" and he does not like what is being revealed. But the Holy Spirit, the Instrument of conviction, is doing His work and capitulation will come.

A godly woman sat one evening reading her Bible while her unsaved husband, for whom she had prayed for many years, was reading the newspaper across the room. Looking up from her meditation, she took a piece of paper and drew a picture of a hook on it and asked, "John, is there a hook made like this?" He looked at it and very quickly replied, "Oh, yes, it's a grappling hook."

"What's a grappling hook for?" she inquired. He answered, "It's a great big hook, with three prongs curving out in different directions. A chief use is in trying to locate a person that has drowned. They drag it through the waters and it snags on the clothing of the victim." After a pause he added, "Why are you interested in this thing?"

To this his wife replied, "John, you know I have been praying for you for a long time. Last night the Lord gave me a vision of this grappling hook, and said He was going to use it on you to bring you to surrender." Nothing more was said of this by either. The faithful mate, however, kept on praying.

About two weeks after this event, John was busy painting a house. As he stood near the top of an extended ladder, suddenly it seemed the Lord said to him that hot afternoon: "John, when are you going to give Me your heart?" John stopped his work, and with his paintbrush in his hand said, "Why, right now, Lord, I guess." And then and there he did give himself to the One who had sought him so long. The grappling hook of Holy Spirit conviction had finally got hold of him.

Let us allow the Holy Spirit to look us through, and to "know us through," so that we may be able to ascertain our true condition.

1. A spiritual diagnosis enables us to know our own heart's condition to the deepest depth.

2. A spiritual diagnosis is needed, for we are unable to know our own hearts without the Spirit's guidance. This is especially true of the unsaved, for the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9)

3. A spiritual diagnosis is dreaded by many people because they already feel under condemnation for wrong living.

4. A spiritual diagnosis is God's method of ferreting out the wrong and bringing it to the light, so we can deal with it.

5. A spiritual diagnosis is needed to show us just what we need to do to eliminate our spiritual problems.

6. A spiritual diagnosis enables us to discern whether our trouble is real or is merely the tempter seeking to discourage us. "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Phil. 3:15).

7. A spiritual diagnosis, if faithfully examined and heeded, will bring one to a place of full commitment to God,

8. A spiritual diagnosis is like a periodic checkup, which will help us see what kind of progress we are making with our Lord.

9. A spiritual diagnosis is always welcomed by the saints, for they want to live so that their Lord is pleased with them at all times.

10. A spiritual diagnosis is necessary for us now, so we can be ready to stand the final test in that great day when it comes.

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ENDNOTES

1 Half Hours with St. John's Epistles (Chicago: Christian Witness Co., 1901), p. 23.

2 Earl Wolf, ed., Choice Illustrations (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), p. 10.

3 Op. cit., p. 45.

4 Henry Alford, The Greek Testament (London: Rivingtons, 1862), IV, 441.

5 The Works of the Rev. John Wesley (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, reprint, n.d.), VII, 38.

6 Thomas S. Kepler (ed.), *Christian Perfection, as Believed and Taught by John Wesley*, (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 30-31.

7 Wolf, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

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THE END