

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified?**

**Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified? - posted by jlosinski, on: 2010/5/7 16:32**

Not trying to start an argument, just curious if he ever made this claim or not. If you know one way or the other, please provide references.

Joe

**Re: Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified? - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/5/8 9:29**

But if there be no such second change; if there be no instantaneous change after justification; if there be none but a gradual work of God as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death.

As to the manner, (that there is a gradual work none denies), then we must be content, I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith: consequently in an instant. Certainly sanctification (in the proper sense) is an instantaneous deliverance from all sin.

—Wesley, Sermons.

Not only sin, properly so-called, that is, a voluntary transgression of a divine law; but sin, improperly so-called, that is, in voluntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 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.

Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to involuntary transgressions.

—Wesley, Plain Account, p. 43.

But does not sanctification shine by its own light? And does not the new birth too? Sometimes it does, and so does sanctification; at others, it does not. In the hour of temptation, Satan clouds the work of God, and injects various doubts and reasonings, especially in those who have either very weak or very strong understandings.

At such times, there is absolute need of that witness, without which, the work of sanctification not only could not be discerned, but could no longer subsist. Were it not for this, the soul could not then abide in the love of God; much less could it rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks. In these circumstances, therefore, a direct testimony that we are sanctified, is necessary in the highest degree.”

—Wesley, Plain Account, p. 75, 76.

I found these quotes doing a short search for John Wesley and Entire Sanctification.

Some may not know that modern American pentecostalism was birthed out of Wesleyan Methodism. Parham is often credited as being the father of pentecostalism in 20th century America. He was a Methodist. So the group I grew up in taught salvation by grace, entire sanctification as a second definite work of grace, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by gifts as the Spirit wills and tongues.

Unfortunately, as you will probably find in researching this topic, many confused entire sanctification, meaning spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23) with a state of sinless perfection where we find ourselves never missing the mark. I don't find this teaching with Wesley. Quite the contrary, I find early Methodists teaching that entire sanctification causes in every believer a power to come that gives greater victory over sin.

Charles Parham believed a rather strange, I think, version of this that I don't believe Wesley taught. There may be some with more knowledge of Wesley than me that can correct or corroborate. Parham believed that a man was not truly born again until he was "sanctified" as a second work of grace. He taught justification as a separate work from re-birth and only gave us a "fire escape" provided we did not have any unrepentant sin after justification. He taught sanctification removed the sin nature that remained even after being forgiven of past sins because that was the point at which our spirit was born again. So salvation dealt only with past sin and sanctification the point at which the spirit was reborn. Although I was taught this my whole life, I came to see that it did not pass Biblical muster if one really digs into what Jesus and the apostles taught about salvation. I think a great deal of the holiness pentecostal movement was influenced by Parham a

and later Seymour and stuck to these doctrines.

A man by the name of Durham was at Azusa street and taught what is called the "finished work" doctrine. He believed that the work of rebirth (sanctification of spirit) occurred at salvation and that the rest of our sanctification was a walking out of a reality in our spirit. The entire work of salvation, including rebirth, was finished at calvary, hence the name. This doctrine caused no small rift and split the work at Azusa. The Assemblies of God and other pentecostal movements came out of Durham's work. The difference in doctrine remains to this day.

I personally see Durham's teaching as more Biblically accurate than Parham's or Seymour's, although I am glad of my heritage as it instilled in me a desire to see the power of God manifest as it was in Parham's meetings and at Azusa Street. Isn't it cool that God will move among us in a powerful way even if we don't have our doctrine all figured out.

**Re: , on: 2010/5/8 9:59**

Many people misinterpret Wesley so that they can find an excuse for their continuing sins, but he did not mean mistakes in the way they want it to mean :

"Q. But how can a liability to mistake consist with perfect love? Is not a person who is perfected in love every moment under its influence? And can any mistake flow from pure love?

"A. I answer, (1.) Many mistakes may consist with pure love; (2.) Some may accidentally flow from it: I mean, love itself may incline us to mistake. The pure love of our neighbour, springing from the love of God, thinketh no evil, believeth and hopeth all things. Now, this very temper, unsuspicious, ready to believe and hope the best of all men, may occasion our thinking some men better than they really are. Here then is a manifest mistake, accidentally flowing from pure love.

For instance: Even one that is perfected in love may mistake with regard to another person, and may think him, in a particular case, to be more or less faulty than he really is. And hence he may speak to him with more or less severity than the truth requires. And in this sense, (though that be not the primary meaning of St. James,) 'in many things we offend all.' This therefore is no proof at all, that the person so speaking is not perfect."

Wesley is saying that mistakes are errors of judgement which we are liable to make as we cannot have perfect knowledge in this life. He is not saying that sins are no longer called sins if one has a 'pure heart'. If one has a pure heart then one does not sin - period. We are speaking of obeying the sermon on the mount - all of the time. One cannot sin and remain entirely sanctified and there is no misnaming sin on God's side - sin is sin and is not to be in the life of the saved.

Wesley said he did not like to use the term sinless perfection but that is what he teaches - mostly - there is one place that seems to contradict but many texts from the past have been interfered with and especially when it comes to this doctrine. He said he did not like to use the term because it was hotly debated by those who did not understand what it means. It does not mean that one can never sin again - we always can fall, but when we are in this blessed state we do not sin at all otherwise we fall from it.

I am not sure if Wesley was ES'd but he certainly had done his reading on those who had. I think maybe he only got to the point of illumination which is the second stage and many today are in that level but they do not go on to the fullness which is union with Christ and a real deliverance from the sin nature.

I heard that he was ES'd near the end of his life but I am still seeking for a ref.

Brenda

**Re: Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified? - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2010/5/8 13:29**

What matters is Wesley believed that GOD will sanctify us entirely by the work of His Holy Spirit within. How many of us today are bold enough to believe GOD will do as HE promised??

I think Wesley's consuming passion to seek and save souls speaks volumes about His consecration!!

**Re: - posted by jlosinski, on: 2010/5/9 3:57**

Thanks for the replies, still no definite answer on whether he claimed to have been or not?  
Joe

**Re: - posted by jlosinski, on: 2010/5/10 10:19**

I've heard that he never claimed to have been, but don't have a reference for that claim.

**Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/5/10 16:48**

I find it a little hard to believe that someone who taught that doctrine so strongly would not claim to have experienced what he taught, but that is only surmising.

It is worthy of note that he did not equate entire sanctification with "christian perfection", or at least did not seem to from what I have read.

**Re: Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified? - posted by JoanM, on: 2010/5/11 0:21**

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection by John Wesley can be found here:([http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/plain\\_account](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/plain_account)). #10 says "In this I described a perfect Christian, placing in the front, 'Not as though I had already attained.'" I understand that to mean he did not consider himself to have attained to being a perfect Christian. I leave it to you and others to discuss whether "entirely sanctified" and "a perfect Christian" are the same thing.

**Re: - posted by jlosinski, on: 2010/5/11 12:53**

Hmm, will do.

**Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2010/5/11 13:55**

Quote:  
-----I find it a little hard to believe that someone who taught that doctrine so strongly would not claim to have experienced what he taught, but that is only surmising  
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I think it is fair to say that Wesley's approach was such that he wanted to let God be true rather than his own experience.

**Re: - posted by elected (), on: 2010/5/11 19:19**

The message is greater than the messenger. Few men will dare say follow me as I follow Christ. It is a modesty of saintly men that they will not talk much about their experiences with God. Paul when he mentioned his rapture in the third heaven, spoke in the third person. People who have exalted experiences of the grace of God try to be humble.

I'm not a student of John Wesley, I have read about his life and read some of his sermons. It is obvious, he was filled with the Spirit and walked in the Spirit and he believed in the perfect love or entire sanctification and preached it. I have no doubt that he knew by experience the perfect love that casts out fear, that pure love burning in his soul like holy fire.

I don't know how much Luther talked about his personal experience of justification by faith but he definitely believed it. Maybe Wesley did not talk (much) about his experience of (entire) sanctification but he definitely believed it. We are sanctified

by the same faith that justified us, if we only believe and absolutely surrender all to Jesus, we will experience him as a purifier and sanctifier.

Blessings,

Redi

**Re: , on: 2010/5/12 2:45**

JoanM

"I understand that to mean he did not consider himself to have attained to being a perfect Christian."

Like many others who want to cling on to the few verses which seem to back up their attempts to continue in their sins, ignoring the many more which deny it, taking Wesley's words, and misappropriating them, the following should correct you on the verse you are using from Phil 3:12 :

[http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/sermons/040.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/040.htm)

"The Sermons of John Wesley  
1872 Edition  
(Thomas Jackson, editor)

SERMON FORTY : Christian Perfection

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." Phil. 3:12.

3. We may not, therefore, lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God, and not of man. But we may and ought to explain the meaning of them, that those who are sincere of heart may not err to the right hand or to the left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling. And this is the more needful to be done because in the verse already repeated the Apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: "Not," saith he, "as though I were already perfect."

(NOTE) And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea and many others, as perfect. "Let us," saith he, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

4. In order, therefore, to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavor to show,

First, in what sense Christians are not; and,

Secondly, in what sense they are, perfect."

If Wesley did not teach perfection and agreed with antinomians that man cannot stop sinning in this life, then why did he suffer so many disputes and gain so many enemies, which took up so much of his time, time which he needed to spend in ministering to those who did desire to be free from sin and who accepted this doctrine, which did not originate with Wesley, and which can be found plainly in scripture unless one wants to turn from the light.

The longings for a holy walk has been placed in our hearts by God, and are there to be fulfilled not quenched for the Lord our God does not give us instructions to be obeyed when they impossible to attain as man cannot be expected to continue seeking for something which will never materialise in this life.

The few verses that detractors hang onto are easily explained as being taken out of context for those who are seeking the truth and have not turned away into perdition.

Brenda

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2010/6/26 16:54**

It is often stated that John Wesley preached but never claimed sanctification. I think it may be true. He refused to give the names, his own included, in any list of those entirely sanctified because as he says in 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection' those who sought them did so with the motives of Herod rather than for truth's sake. However, Wesley did claim to know many who claimed and enjoyed the experience.

**Re: Did John Wesley ever claim to be entirely sanctified? - posted by Danman, on: 2011/10/24 8:33**

I don't know if he ever used the phrase "I've achieved christian perfection" or "I've been entirely sanctified". But I did read a quote from his works somewhere, (either in his journal or one of his letters) a year or so ago that said: (I'm paraphrasing) that he was touched by the Spirit of God in a way that was greater and more of change in his life than when he was first saved. When I find the exact quote I'll post it.

However I did find this from page 218 V.3 of his journal, though it's not as clear as the other quote I think it's sufficient evidence to prove that he did claim it.

"In January, 1738, I expressed my desire in these words:--

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!

And I am still persuaded this is what the Lord Jesus hath bought for me with his own blood."

Dan

**Re: - posted by DEADn (), on: 2011/10/24 13:19**

Seems to me that if anyone came to this claim they are utterly deceived and dangerous to those who believe in Jesus.

**Re: - posted by JB1968 (), on: 2011/10/24 17:05**

Hebrews 12:14 "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"

Wesley knew and believed this is what God required of him. He preached that he believed God raised up the Methodists to "spread scriptural holiness." He believed it and preached it.

By the way, Deadn, be careful in judging one of God's great servants.

**Re: - posted by Christinyou (), on: 2011/10/24 17:28**

How is it that we might present every man perfect in Christ?

Col 1:28-29

By His working in which He works in us?

Is this sanctification? I am still not perfect but He that is in me is?

By His sanctified work in me, is this the perfection?

I can only be perfect in Christ by His working in me and through me. That is why it is so important what Paul Said, "In the body of His flesh through death, to present you Holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight."

Gal 2:20, "it is no longer I who live, but what?"

Of whom Paul was made a minister of this ministry and mystery, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory". This is truly p

perfection by our faith, by the Christ that is birthed in us of the Father, Born again of incorruptable Seed, (sperma), the living Word in us. John 1

Col 1:27 and 1 Peter 1:23

In Christ and His perfection, the only thing that makes me perfect, the Christ in us.

In Him: Phillip

**Re:Great points! - posted by Danman, on: 2011/10/26 14:42**

"It is a modesty of saintly men that they will not talk much about their experiences with God." "It is obvious, he was filled with the Spirit and walked in the Spirit and he believed in the perfect love or entire sanctification and preached it." I agree completely! There was a quote by someone I'm not sure who (maybe Dr. Clarke, or Coke) who knew both Wesley & the saintly Fletcher well, when asked: (to paraphrase) Wasn't Mr. Fletcher a holier man than John Wesley? Answer: No way, "no man ever lived like John Wesley!"

**Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2011/10/27 0:40**

it is interesting that John Weasley saw George Whitfield as one of the greatest preachers and saints of his time

but Whitfield himself never believed in the doctrine of entire sanctification, or in a second work of grace like Weasley. I read Whitfield believed he sinned everyday

just a little snippet of Weasley's sermon

. And, first, let us keep close to the grand scriptural doctrines which he everywhere delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding) are and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may "agree to disagree." But, meantime, let us hold fast the essentials of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints;" and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on, at all times, and in all places!

2. His fundamental point was, "Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man;" and, "In the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible." With this point, he and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists, so called, set out. Their grand principle was, there is no power (by nature) and no merit in man. They insisted, all power to think, speak, or act aright, is in and from the Spirit of Christ; and all merit is (not in man, how high soever in grace, but merely) in the blood of Christ. So he and they taught: there is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire. For it is not enough to say, all men are sick of sin: no, we are all "dead in trespasses and sins." It follows, that all the children of men are, "by nature, children of wrath." We are all "guilty before God," liable to death temporal and eternal.

3. And we are all helpless, both with regard to the power and to the guilt of sin. "For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" None less than the Almighty. Who can raise those that are dead, spiritually dead in sin? None but He who raised us from the dust of the earth. But on what consideration will He do this? "Not for works of righteousness that we have done." "The dead cannot praise Thee, O Lord;" nor do anything for the sake of which they should be raised to life. Whatever, therefore, God does, He does it merely for the sake of His well-beloved Son: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." He Himself "bore" all "our sins in His own body upon the tree." He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Here then is the sole meritorious cause of every blessing we do or can enjoy; in particular of our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification. But by what means do we become interested in what Christ has done and suffered? "Not by works, lest any man should boast;" but by faith alone. "We conclude," says the Apostle, "that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law." And "to as many as" thus "receive Him, giveth He power to become the sons of God, even to those that believe in His name; who are born, not of the will of man, but of God."

4. And "except a man be" thus "born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But all who are thus "born of the Spirit" have "the kingdom of God within them." Christ sets up His kingdom in their hearts; "righteousness, peace, and joy in the



Holy Ghost." That "mind is in them, which was in Christ Jesus," enabling them to "walk as Christ also walked." His indwelling Spirit makes them both holy in heart, and "holy in all manner of conversation." But still, seeing all this is a free gift, through the righteousness and blood of Christ, there is eternally the same reason to remember, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

5. You are not ignorant that these are the fundamental doctrines which he everywhere insisted on. And may they not be summed up, as it were, in two words, -- the new birth, and justification by faith? These let us insist upon with all boldness, at all times, and in all places; -- in public (those of us who are called thereto), and at all opportunities in private. Keep close to these good, old, unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme. Go on, my brethren, in the "name of the Lord, and in the power of His might." With all care and diligence, "keep that safe which is committed to your trust;" knowing that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but this truth shall not pass away."

6. But will it be sufficient to keep close to his doctrines, how pure soever they are? Is there not a point of still greater importance than this, namely, to drink into his spirit? -- herein to be a follower of him, even as he was of Christ? Without this, the purity of our doctrines would only increase our condemnation. This, therefore, is the principal thing -- to copy after his spirit. And allowing that in some points we must be content to admire what we cannot imitate; yet in many others we may, through the same free grace, be partakers of the same blessing. Conscious then of your own wants and of His bounteous love, who "giveth liberally and upbraids not," cry to Him that works all in all for a measure of the same precious faith; of the same zeal and activity; the same tender-heartedness, charitableness, bowels of mercies. Wrestle with God for some degree of the same grateful, friendly, affectionate temper; of the same openness, simplicity, and godly sincerity; "I love without dissimulation." Wrestle on, till the power from on high works in you the same steady courage and patience; and above all, because it is the crown of all, the same invariable integrity!

7. Is there any other fruit of the grace of God with which he was eminently endowed, and the want of which among the children of God he frequently and passionately lamented? There is one, that is, catholic love; that sincere and tender affection which is due to all those who, we have reason to believe, are children of God by faith; in other words, all those, in every persuasion, who "fear God and work righteousness." He longed to see all who had "tasted of the good word," of a true catholic spirit; a word little understood, and still less experienced, by many who have it frequently in their mouth. Who is he that answers this character? Who is the man of a catholic spirit? One who loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers of the present kingdom of heaven, and fellow heirs of His eternal kingdom, all, of whatever opinion, mode of worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is a man of a truly catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and an earnest desire of their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men; who speaks comfortably to them, and labors, by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power, in all things, spiritual and temporal; he is ready to "spend and be spent" for them; yea, "to lay down his life for his brethren."

**Re: wrong quote - posted by Danman, on: 2011/10/30 15:35**

"But I did read a quote from his works somewhere, (either in his journal or one of his letters) a year or so ago that said: (I am paraphrasing) that he was touched by the Spirit of God in a way that was greater and more of change in his life than when he was first saved."

I said it was more than a year ago, that I read what I had paraphrased above, I recently located it and saw that it was from his initial salvation at Aldersgate street. Here are two quotes by him that show his sanctification experience. And I'd like to ask for those who need more proof, how many times in his writings did he talk about his salvation experience?

Dec. 24, 1744 Journal V1

"in the evening, while I was reading prayers at Snows-fields, I found such light and strength, as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought (as well as every action or word) just as it was arising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride or selfishness: I never knew before (I mean not is at this time) what it was to be still before God.

Tuesday 25, I waked, by the grace of God, in the same spirit: and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe, and tender sense of the presence of God, as greatly confirmed me therein. So that God was before

ore me all the day long : I sought and found him in every place; and could truly say, when I lay down at night, " Now I have lived a day."

Oct. 1762 Journal v.3

“Many years ago my brother frequently said, Your day of Pentecost is not fully come; but I doubt not it will; and you will then hear of persons sanctified, as frequently as you do now of persons justified; and any unprejudiced reader may observe that it was now fully come.”

If this doesn't convince you, you can't be convinced by man.