



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

The Sanctification of J. A. Wood

By J. A. Wood

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A SUPPLEMENT TO MY SALARY

Our financial support (quarterage, as it was called), made up of onions, potatoes, cabbages, beets, turnips, maple sugar and money, amounted to less than one hundred dollars. But, toward spring, on a cold, snowy night, about

eight o'clock a cavalcade came down the lane to the house, opened the door, rolled in a barrel of flour, threw in a pair of boots, a box of sugar, a couple of dresses for my wife and a few other store bundles. Then about seventy-five people came in. They set the table in the big kitchen with pies, cakes and other eatables, and then sat down and ate all of it. They then seated Mrs. Wood and me in a couple of chairs in the middle of the room and marched around us.

We were young people in the first year of our married life. Every man kissed my wife and threw a piece of money into her lap, and every woman kissed her pastor and dropped a coin into his hand.

They left about seventy dollars in money, besides other valuables. This, our first Donation visit, was a great help to us at this time, when I had run in debt for a horse and buggy, and we were just starting, without any furnished parsonage.

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

My next appointment, in April, 1857, was at Court street, Binghamton. I did not want to go there, and protested to the Elder against being sent there. There were more entirely sanctified people in that church than in any half dozen churches in the conference. It was one of the best appointments in the conference, and B. W. Gorham, Epenetus Owen and other sanctified ministers had been their pastors, and Dr. and Mrs. Palmer had held meetings with them repeatedly. On account of their stand on the subject of holiness, I was prejudiced against them, and many of the membership were prejudiced against me. At camp meetings and elsewhere I had antagonized them.

Up to this time, the first nine years of my ministry, I had practically ignored the doctrine of entire sanctification, and while blest with great revivals on all my charges, none of my members either sought or professed that blessing. I taught growth in grace, and Christian culture, and an indefinite gradualism. I disliked to hear the Wesleyan truth preached, and opposed those who preached it, and especially those who professed it. (*Smooth* grace is not His Grace. His is robust. Edit.)

In the cars on my way to Binghamton I felt deeply, shed some tears, and did a good deal of praying. I resolved to preach all the personal religion I could, to carefully avoid attacking those who professed full salvation, and not to antagonize the doctrine as they held it.

The church as a body received me kindly, though I am sorry to say a few declared they would not sit under my ministry, and left; but in a few weeks they all came back, as they were told I was preaching well, and had made no drive at their views. I had not been there but a short time before I became convinced that I was preaching to some people who had a better and deeper spiritual experience than I had. This I saw in the class and prayer meetings, and it made me feel dissatisfied and uncomfortable. This grew on me with the conviction that they were Wesleyan in their views and experience, while I had drifted from the Wesleyan and Bible doctrine.

I was so dissatisfied with myself, with my work, and had such hard times in the pulpit, that I went to my Elder, Dr. Rounds, and begged him to release me from the charge. God be praised that he did not do it! During that summer I lay many an hour on the floor of my study praying God to come to my help and give me more freedom in my work, and yet was too proud to tell my church the conflict and trial I was passing through. I learned afterward that the spiritually-minded in the church discerned my condition and were praying for me night and day.

That church was a great camp meeting people, and on the first day of September about seventy members with their families went to Kittleville camp meeting. They had some forty-five tents, beside their big prayer meeting tent, which would accommodate about four hundred people.

During six days of that meeting, with thirty or more of my members professing full salvation, I said nothing on the subject, and yet my soul was in great distress over it. We came to the last afternoon of the meeting, and Dr. Rounds was to preach. He asked me to exhort after his sermon.

Before I took my seat in the stand, I had a fearful struggle, and I could hold out no longer. One of my best members had just said to me “Oh, Brother Wood, if you will take a stand for full salvation, God will bless you, and lots of your people.” I promised the Lord that at the close of the sermon I would go into our prayer tent, confess my need of entire sanctification and ask my church to pray for me, and I would go back to Binghamton and stand up for full salvation, where that truth had been trailing in the dust during my ministry. In an instant the Rubicon was passed. The moment of submission was the moment of victory. There was such a conscious giving away in my heart that it appeared as if something had torn loose in me, and an indescribable quietness pervaded my whole being. I walked up into the pulpit and took my seat back of Dr. Rounds. There were about forty preachers on the stand, and some three thousand people in the congregation.

Just as the preacher announced his text, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,” the blessed Holy Ghost fell on me, and an unusual sense of the divine presence pervaded the whole congregation. The power that fell on me swept me into the land of Beulah, and two preachers sitting by my side held me during the sermon, while all I knew for three hours was that God had me, and the heaven of heavens was streaming through and through my soul. For me to describe those three hours is utterly impossible, and I have never attempted to do so. It was like passing through the gates to the bosom of Jesus and taking a full draught at the fountain of life.

I had been prejudiced against persons losing their strength, and, as might be expected, the Holy Ghost did his work, taking control of both body and soul, before the preachers and the thousands of people. When I came to know where I was, I found myself laid on some quilts on the pulpit platform, and a spontaneous combustion coming from my inner being, saying at every breath, “precious Jesus,” “precious Jesus,” “precious Jesus.” Crowded about me were the members of my church, weeping, shouting, and rejoicing. God had sanctified their preacher.

As soon as I was able to walk I went to our big prayer tent and told my people my purpose and that God had forestalled my design, taken me at my promise and had gloriously cleansed my soul.

I then invited all who wanted to be entirely sanctified to take the long row of middle benches through the tent, and they were immediately filled. That meeting never closed till the sun rose in the morning, and such a night of refining fire and power I never saw before, nor since, though I have been in many mighty meetings. There would be a prayer struggle, and then about every half hour the refining power would come, and two and three and sometimes more would be gloriously saved, and at times a dozen or more would be prostrated under the power. In the morning all were clothed and in their right mind in time for the cars, and I took into Binghamton the happiest company of Christians that ever entered that city; and in four weeks over seventy souls professed to be converted in my church.

I remained at Court street two years, and God gave the church a high tide of general prosperity. In the last year, the thirty-second of my age, I wrote the most of “Perfect Love.”

THE RESULTS OF THIS CLEANSING BAPTISM

1. A sacred nearness to God, my Saviour. The distance between God and my soul has appeared annihilated, and the glory and presence of divinity have often appeared like a flood of sunlight, surrounding and pervading my whole being.
2. A sense of inexpressible sweetness in Christ. The fact that he is “the rose of Sharon,” “the lily of the valley,” “the brightness of his (the Father’s) glory,” has at times filled my soul with ecstatic rapture.
3. A deep, realizing sense of spiritual things. Bible truth has appeared transformed into solid realities. The doctrines of the gospel become to me tangible facts.
4. A surprising richness and fullness of meaning in the Scriptures, which I had not before realized.

Many portions of the Bible, which I had hitherto but little understood, now appeared full of meaning, and exceedingly precious.

5. A triumph over temptation more complete and habitual. After that baptism I found no elements in my heart siding with the tempter. Before, I was conscious of inward affinities which sided with the tempter.
6. A great increase in spiritual power. This I realized in my closet devotions, in my pastoral duties, and especially in the pulpit, in presenting the blessed truth of God. I learned by experience that man may receive the Holy Spirit in measure limited only by his capacity to receive, and feeble ability to endure Him.
7. A clear and distinct witness of purity through the blood of Christ. The testimony of the Holy Spirit, and of my spirit, to the entire sanctification of my soul, became more clear and convincing than any I ever had of my regeneration; although I had no doubt of that years before.
8. A disposition to tell the blessed story of Christ and his "great salvation." I longed for a thousand tongues to publish the glad tidings to perishing men. During my pastorate at Susquehanna and Binghamton Rev. D. W. C. Huntington, a dearly loved brother, who joined the Vermont conference at the time I did, assisted me in revival meetings, and I assisted him. At that time he was clear in his experience and strong in his testimony and teachings of entire sanctification, more so than I was. His sermons then, and his articles for the press at that time were a great help to me.

Our friendship and intimacy has not ceased for over fifty years, though our views have differed in late years. Human environments have much to do in modifying and shaping our views of truth, and Dr. Huntington's environments in the Genesee Conference were very trying and doubtless had much to do in changing his views respecting the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. I believe with Dr. J. M. Buckley that if Dr. Huntington had held on to his early experience, he would never have written his book on "Sin and Holiness."

BROOKLYN, PA.

From Binghamton I was sent to Brooklyn, a small country circuit in Susquehanna County, Pa.; sent there, as I had reason to believe, because of the open stand I had taken on the subject of entire sanctification. After God fully sanctified my soul the opponents of that work predicted the end of my usefulness and revival work, as I had run off on the hobby of sanctification. I was supplied with plenty of advice by the preachers and officials, to go slow, be prudent and not press the subject, or I would divide my churches, and do great harm. It was at the beginning of our civil war, and there were but few revivals in the conference, but the Lord gave me three blessed revivals at Brooklyn, and it was a year of victory. The first revival broke out in a prayer meeting when I was absent. I asked Judge Ashley to take the charge of the prayer meeting at night. I had preached on perfect love in the morning, and Ashley urged them in the prayer meeting to seek full salvation. About nine o'clock the sexton came to the parsonage and said I was wanted at the church. When I went into the church I found some twenty of my members on the floor under the power of God. As I walked in among them I went down very quick by the same power. For a time all seemed prostrated. Although the nights were dark and the roads were muddy, I commenced meetings at once, and the people came from all directions, and about sixty professed conversion, and all my class leaders and stewards were entirely sanctified.

One other meeting I will notice. The township of Lathrop on this circuit had acquired an unfortunate notoriety for Sabbath breaking, profanity, petty lawsuits, and all manner of evil. For years rum, infidelity and the devil had the predominance. The Lord visited this town in great mercy, sanctified some of the members, reclaimed backsliders and converted over forty penitent sinners.

One poor, drunken sinner said he came to get "seven rods of religion," and succeeded in getting just seven dollars' worth of law and justice. The reformation took hold at the foundation, and healed neighborhood difficulties, stopped lawsuits, crushed out infidelity and subdued slanderous, backbiting tongues, and constrained all to say, "Peace is declared in Lathrop." When the revival closed, the town had a judge of election, a constable, two justices of the peace and a supervisor who feared God and loved the church.

THE PUBLICATION OF PERFECT LOVE

During this year I finished writing and published "Perfect Love." Up to this time in the ministry I had saved, by a rigid economy, about four hundred dollars. I told my parents I was going to put that into my book. They replied, "You go and put it into a book, and you will never see it again." I replied: "I shall do it, loss or no loss. God has directed and assisted me to write it, and money is out of the question." While I was in Boston getting the plates out, Col. Ellsworth was shot in Alexandria, Fort Sumter fell, and the war began.

It has been reported by visitors to California that I have a large, beautiful, comfortable and delightful home at Lincoln Park, Cal. That is true, and, by the way, I will say that every dollar that built and furnished my home here came from the sales of "Perfect Love."

The title was a happy one, and its sale has been phenomenal. Between fifty and sixty thousand copies have been sold in this country, and three book houses have issued it in England. When I was in England, Gen. Booth told me he had just bought the plates of "Perfect Love" and one thousand copies to scatter among his soldiers of the Salvation Army.

WAVERLY, NEW YORK

I stayed but one year in Brooklyn, and in the spring of 1861, I was appointed to Waverly, New York. That charge had been blest with precious revivals for several years previous, and in the midst of the great war excitement it was difficult to convince the church that it could have a revival this year, but soon many of the best members sought and obtained full salvation. For several months the blessed work of "perfecting the saints" went on until all my class leaders, two local preachers, and my stewards were cleansed in the atoning blood, and tasted the joys of perfect love. Soon the work broke out among sinners, and we had over fifty clear conversions. The work of sanctification gave an interest, sweetness and power to our class and prayer meetings such as that church had never possessed before.

At Athens, a town three miles from Waverly, Methodism, during years past had been waning, until it had become well nigh extinct. They had not had any preaching for nine months past. At the request of a class of sixteen members, nearly all females, I commenced a series of meetings there, taking with me some of the sanctified members from Waverly. Over forty souls came forward for prayers the first week. The meetings were continued six weeks, and during that time over two hundred and fifty people came out as seekers of pardon, and one hundred and seventy-five of them gave good evidence of conversion. During these meetings quite a number of the converts and others sought perfect love, and this gave a marked interest to the meetings. Since then that charge has been self-supporting, and built a large, commodious church.

During the work in Athens there were many very impressive and mighty conversions. Elisha Satterlee, who kept the American Hotel, and was known all over Bradford County, was one instance.

His wife was a Methodist, and he made Methodist preachers welcome to his hospitality, and no matter how many sat at the table he would ask the preacher to ask a blessing. He had an only daughter that he almost idolized. She was happily converted and it greatly affected him. He then came out to the meetings and took his seat behind the stove, out of sight as much as possible. He did that three nights and then I went to him and asked him forward. The three nights before some of his prominent neighbors had been converted at one corner of the altar, and he replied he would go if I would take him to the place where those men were converted and stick by him till he got through.

When he started, it was like the breaking away of a mighty flood. He had a fearful struggle and his coming to the altar started many others, but I could not give them attention, as I had promised him to stick to him, I knew he would have to give up rum selling in his hotel, and I feared the results. I finally asked him and he replied that he had

settled that behind the stove. In a few minutes, while we were singing, "I can, I will, I do believe that Jesus saves me now," he burst out singing it, and rose up and sung it standing. It shook that congregation mightily and over forty started before the service closed. I knew the Devil would be after him, and I went home with him. In a few minutes a man called and asked him if he would rent his bar and hotel. He replied, "No! No more liquor sold in this house while I own it." The next morning nearly all his hotel liquors went into the gutter in the street. He joined the church, became class leader and steward and kept a temperance house for years.

Twenty years after when my son was pastor at Lock Haven, Pa., Elisha Satterlee was a steward and class leader in his church.

At the close of the year in Waverly I went to the conference in Wilkes-Barre expecting to be returned as much as I expected to live, as I left at Waverly and Athens over three hundred converts to be cared for.

While at Waverly, just before the conference, it pleased the blessed Lord to give us our only daughter, our precious and lovely little Mayme.

WILKES-BARRE, PA.

Wilkes-Barre is the great center of the anthracite coal region of the Wyoming valley, and at that time had about sixteen thousand population. The first Methodist church was the largest, the richest, and the most fashionable and worldly church in the Wyoming conference. It had more rich men, college graduates and prominent men in it than any three or four churches in the whole conference.

For several years past they had been waning in spiritual life with no revivals under light, speculative preaching by a man who when he left there went to the Episcopal church. They asked the Bishop to send them a man who would preach the gospel and religion. Rev. John J. Pierce, my presiding elder, told them he had such a man, but they could not have him, as he had several hundred converts to look after. At the close of the Friday session the Bishop announced that J. A. Wood would preach in the evening. Nothing had been said to me, and it was a severe trial to me. It was what I had never done, to preach at the conference, I was not prepared to do it. I learned afterward that the Bishop had been requested to have me preach, which, had I known, I would not have consented a moment. My elder's remark directed the official board to me, and without my knowing it had the matter fixed as a trial sermon, and that before the whole conference.

I went to my room, and spent the afternoon on my knees and face in prayer to God, and decided to obey the Bishop, but to only present a little, simple, plain truth on "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her." The blessed Lord helped me, and I had any easy time, and said all I wanted to. The next day the official board, which had been divided on three or four different preachers, united on me. On Saturday night, as I was about to start to go to Scranton to preach on Sunday, one of the church officials said to me, "We are going to have you for our preacher." Up to this time I knew nothing of this whole affair. I told him that was not so, and laughed at him, and went on to Scranton. Monday, on my return to conference, I found it was all out among the preachers, and at eleven o'clock my name was read off for the first church of Wilkes-Barre, in April, 1862. I was greatly grieved to leave my converts at Waverly and Athens, and some of our Bishops said they would not have taken me away from Waverly even though Wilkes-Barre wanted me. Some of the preachers as they left said: "Now we will see how Wood's sanctification will go in Wilkes-Barre."

The Provost Marshal's office was at Wilkes-Barre and there were from two to five or six thousand soldiers coming and going to the war, and we were almost within sound of the thunders of Gettysburg.

I preached the first four months to the church at ten a.m. And to sinners in the evening. After I had been there a few weeks, I heard that one of the most influential members of the church said: "Our preacher has got to come down, or the church has got to come up." I resolved by the help of Almighty God, not to come down, and if there was to be an equilibrium between us they had got to come up. During the summer one after another of the leading women in

the church and city sought and obtained the blessed experience of full salvation. That started a decided interest in our class and prayer meetings which filled up and became seasons of melting power.

The women who sought perfect love were among the most wealthy families in the city and their experience and influence could not be ignored. The four Slocum sisters, wives of Judge Bennett, Lord Butler, Sharp D. Lewis and Lawyer Drake, were wealthy influential women that could not be pushed aside.

Early in September I announced that a revival service would begin in the audience room. Judge Bennett said: "Hold your meetings in the prayer room, as we have never had any revival in our audience room." I insisted on the big audience room, the largest in the conference, and the first night it was full and nine grown men came to the altar seeking pardon. That room was filled and often crowded for ninety-seven nights, and over four hundred and fifty sinners came forward for prayers.

Every few evenings some members of the society would be entirely sanctified, and that would add continued power and interest to the meetings. The Holy Spirit cut through every strata of society, reaching the highest and the lowest circles in social life. All classes, physicians, lawyers, editors and congressmen and army officials were brought into the gospel kingdom. Especially it took a strong hold of the legal profession. We received into society six members of the Wilkes-Barre bar, these possessed a high order of talent, and four out of the six became either local or traveling preachers.

The results of this work were, great improvements in the large audience room, more than double increase in the benevolences, and I received at one time one hundred and ninety probationers into full membership, whose aggregated wealth ran up into millions. The Wyoming conference had a good chance to see "how sanctification would go in Wilkes-Barre."

One evening a bright young lawyer came down the aisle while I was preaching, smiting on his breast, saying, "The rocks can rend, the earth can quake, of feeling all things show some sign, but this unfeeling heart of mine," and got down at the altar. I stopped preaching and invited sinners forward. He had a fearful struggle, and I was glad Dr. Nelson, my elder, who knew him, was there, as it required several persons to take care of him. He would have left the altar but for his wife, who with her arms around him would not let him go. I told him God had promised, though our sins were as scarlet, they should be as white as wool. With the tears streaming down his face he said: "Mine are black." I quoted, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Where is that? He asked. I opened the Bible and put my finger on it, and let him see it. He soon found relief and springing up walked up and down the aisle shaking hands and exclaiming: "It is good," "It is good," "It is good."

He has now been a prominent and useful member of the church for over forty years, and judge of the orphans court the most of that time.

The following extract is J. A. Wood's testimony as related in his book "Perfect Love". Edit.

SECTION 24

THE AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCE

228. Will you relate your experience of regeneration, and of entire sanctification?

I will. The Saviour's precious love constrains me to testify to his gracious dealings with my soul at every suitable opportunity.

Mr. Fletcher says: "When you are solemnly called upon to bear testimony to the truth, and to say what great things God has done for you, it would be cowardice or false prudence not to do it with humility."

It pleased the Lord to call me in early life to seek pardon and converting grace. At ten years of age I first tasted the joys of a Saviour's love. I remember as early as then to have realized a sweet satisfaction and delight in prayer and effort to obey God. At the age of thirteen I joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Through the blessing and grace of God, I have found a home ever since in the church of my early choice.

During the first five or six years of my experience, I was often perplexed and distressed with doubts in regard to the reality of my conversion; arising from my inability to fix upon the precise time when the change was wrought. I would often see people powerfully converted, and hear them tell of the place and the time of their conversion. The tempter would then whisper in my ear, "You can not tell when you were converted, and you never had those deep convictions or those marked exercises in religious experience of which many speak."

From this source I had much trouble, and at times, for several years, found it exceedingly difficult to hold fast my confidence. After many and severe trials on this point, the Lord enabled me to settle the matter and, a thousand thanks to his blessed name, many years have passed since I have doubted for a moment the verity of my early conversion. The Lord removed my doubts by showing me that to know the precise time of my conversion was of little importance; while the great question for me to settle was, "Have I the evidence that I am now converted?" From this time until September 7, 1858, I maintained a steady purpose to obey God, received many spiritual refreshings from the presence of the Lord, and suffered but few doubts in regard to my justification and membership in the family of God.

During this period I was often convicted of remaining corruption of heart and of my need of purity. I desired to be a decided Christian and a useful member of the church; but was often conscious of deep-rooted inward evils and tendencies in my heart unfriendly to godliness. My bosom-foes troubled me more than all my foes from without. They struggled for the ascendancy.

They marred, my peace. They obscured my spiritual vision. They were the instruments of severe temptation. They interrupted my communion with God. They crippled my efforts to do good. They invariably sided with Satan. They occupied a place in my heart which I knew should be possessed by the Holy Spirit. They were the greatest obstacles to my growth in grace, and rendered my service to God but partial.

I was often more strongly convicted of my need of inward purity than I ever had been of my need of pardon. God showed me the importance and the necessity of holiness as clear as a sunbeam. I seldom studied the Bible without conviction of my fault in not coming up to the Scripture standard of salvation.

I never read Mr. Wesley's "Plain Account," nor the standards of Methodism on the subject of holiness, nor the memoirs of Fletcher, Bramwell, Carvosso, or Stoner, without deep conviction on the subject, and more or less effort for its attainment. I often commenced seeking holiness, but at no time made any marked progress; for as I read and prayed, some duty was presented which I was unwilling to perform, and so I relapsed into indifference.

I was often led to see my need of purity while studying for the ministry with Rev. William Hill, of Cambridgeport, Vt. Brother Hill was an able Presbyterian minister, and for a number of years pastor of a Presbyterian church in Newburg, N. Y. He was convicted of his need of entire sanctification, and obtained it at a meeting for the promotion of holiness at Mrs. Palmer's in New York city. He lived it, professed it, and preached it, and for so doing was expelled from the Hudson River Presbytery, in April, 1844. Rev. Henry Belden was expelled at the same time for the same cause. They united with the Congregational church. Brother Hill died in holy triumph at Bristol, Conn., July 31, 1851, in the thirty-seventh year of his age.

The society and influence of that holy man were a great blessing to me. I bowed with him in prayer in his study more than a hundred times, and held sweet communion with God. Those seasons of devotion still linger in my memory as among the most precious hours of my early ministry.

Being so often convicted of my need of perfect love, and failing to obtain it, I, after a while, like many others, became somewhat skeptical in regard to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, as a distinct work, subsequent to regeneration. (See Section IV. Of this book.) I held no clear or definite ideas in regard to the blessing of perfect love, but thought of it, and taught it, as only a deeper work of grace, or a little more religion. I taught, as many now do, a gradual growth into holiness, and threw the whole matter into indefiniteness and vague generalities. I expected to grow into holiness somehow, somewhere, and at some time, but knew not how, nor where, nor when.

I urged believers to seek a deeper work of grace, and to get more religion, but seldom said to them, “Be ye holy,” “This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” or, seek “perfect love.” I became somewhat prejudiced against the Bible terms “sanctification,” “holiness,” and “perfection,” and disliked very much to hear persons use them in speaking of their experience; and opposed the profession of holiness as a blessing distinct from regeneration. I became prejudiced against the special advocates of holiness; and at camp-meetings and in other places discouraged and opposed direct efforts for its promotion. If a pious brother exhorted the preachers to seek sanctification, or the members to put away worldliness, tobacco and gaudy attire, and seek holiness, I was distressed in spirit, and disposed to find fault.

During a number of years, this was about my state of mind upon this subject. And let me here record, that while hundreds of sinners were converted to God, I do not recollect that a single believer was entirely sanctified under my labors during the first nine years of my ministry, to September 7, 1855. Let me further add, during this time I was grieved, from year to year, by seeing what might astonish hell, and fill heaven with lamentation – company after company of young converts walking into partially backslidden, unsanctified churches, first to wonder, then for a while to be grieved, but finally to add another layer to the backslidden stratification.

In May, 1858, I was appointed to Court Street Church, Binghamton, and went there much prejudiced against the professors of holiness in that church; and they were, doubtless, prejudiced against me, as they had cause to believe I would oppose them. I soon found in my pastoral visitations, that where those persons lived who professed the blessing of holiness, there I felt the most of divine influence and power, and realized a liberty in prayer, and an access to God in those families, which I did not elsewhere.

Let me remark, while I was prejudiced against holiness as a distinct blessing, and against its special advocates, I did desire and believe in a deep, thorough, vital piety, and was ready to sympathize with it wherever I found it. I had attended prayer and class meetings but few times before I saw clearly that there were those in that society whose experience and piety possessed a richness, depth, and power which I had not; and that I was preaching to some who enjoyed more religion than their pastor.

The better I became acquainted with them, the more I was convinced of this, and the more deeply I became convicted of my remaining depravity and need of being cleansed in the blood of Christ. I also became convinced that those professors of holiness were Wesleyan in their faith, experience, and practice, while I had drifted away somewhat from the Bible and Wesleyan theory of Christian perfection.

Through the entire summer of 1858 I was seeking holiness, but kept the matter to myself. During this time none of the professors of holiness said any thing to me in the subject, but, as I have learned since, were praying for me night and day. God only knew the severe struggles I had that long summer, during many hours of which I lay on my face in my study, begging Jesus to cleanse my poor, unsanctified heart; and yet was unwilling to make a public avowal of my feelings, or to ask the prayers of God’s people for my sanctification.

The Binghamton district camp-meeting commenced that year the 1st day of September, and about eighty of the members of my charge attended it with me. During six days of the meeting, the sanctification of my soul was before my mind constantly, and yet I neither urged others to seek it, nor intimated to any one my convictions and struggles on the subject. Six days of such deep humiliation, severe distress, and hard struggles I never endured before.

A number of the members present from my charge had once enjoyed this grace, and had lost it.

Some who professed to enjoy it were becoming silent upon the subject. With but very few exceptions, we, as a church, were practically staving off and ignoring the doctrine and duty of entire sanctification. The Lord was evidently displeased with us, and so shut us up that our prayer-meetings, in our large society tent, literally ran out. The brethren and sisters became afflicted with themselves, and afflicted with each other. Some of them were even tempted to strike their tents and go home.

On the last day of the meeting, a few minutes before preaching, a faithful member of the church came to me weeping, and said, “Brother Wood, there is no use in trying to dodge this question. You know your duty. If you will lead the way, and define your position as a seeker of entire sanctification, you will find that many of the members of your charge have a mind to do the same.” The Lord had so humbled my heart that I was willing to do any thing to obtain relief. After a few moments’ reflection I replied, “Immediately after preaching I will appoint a meeting in our

tent on the subject of holiness, and will ask the prayers of the church for my own soul.” Glory be to God! The Rubicon was passed. The moment of decision was the moment of triumph.

In an instant I felt a giving away in my heart, so sensible and powerful, that it appeared physical rather than spiritual; a moment after I felt an indescribable sweetness permeating my entire being.

It was a sweetness as real and as sensible to my soul as ever the sweetest honey to my taste. I immediately walked up into the stand. Just as he preacher gave out his text, -- Eccl. Xii. 13, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,” &c., -- the baptism of fire and power came upon me.

For me to describe what I then realized is utterly impossible. It was such as I need not attempt to describe to those who have felt and tasted it, and such as I can not describe to the comprehension of those whose hearts have never realized it. I was conscious that Jesus had me in his arms, and that the Heaven of heavens was streaming through and through my soul in such beams of light and overwhelming love and glory, as can never be uttered. The half can never be told! It was like marching through the gates of the city to the bosom of Jesus, and taking a full draught from the river of life.

Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! I have cause to shout over the work of that precious hour.

It was a memorable era in the history of my probation, a glorious epoch in my religious experience never, NEVER to be forgotten. Jesus there and then – all glory to his blessed name! -- sweetly, completely, and most powerfully sanctified my soul and body to himself. He melted, cleansed, filled, and thrilled my feeble, unworthy soul with holy, sin-consuming power.

Glory be to God! Perfect love is the richest, the sweetest, and the purest love this side of Paradise.

Angels have nothing better. Well may the poet sing, --

“Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour’s praises speak!”

I had always been much prejudiced against persons losing their strength; consequently, as might be expected, when the Holy Ghost came upon me in the stand, surrounded by some thirty preachers and three thousand people, it was God’s order to take control of both body and soul, and swallow me up in the great deep of his presence and power.

After about three hours I regained sufficient strength to walk to the tent, and we commenced a meeting for the promotion of holiness. I told my church my purpose to ask their prayers as a seeker of holiness, but that Jesus had forestalled my design by accepting my soul the moment I consented to stand up for holiness, and was willing to be anything or do anything to obtain it.

A willingness to humble myself, and take a decided stand for holiness, and face opposition to it in the church, and take the odium of being an advocate of holiness in Binghamton, where that doctrine had been trailing in the dust for years, constituted the turning-point with me. After I reached that point of complete submission, I had no consciousness of making any special effort in believing; my whole being seemed simply, and without effort, to be borne away to Jesus.

Our meeting continued all night; and such a night I never experienced. A large number of my leading members commenced seeking holiness; and about every half hour during that whole night the glorious power of God came down from the upper ocean in streams as sweet as heaven. At times it was unspeakable and almost unendurable. It was oppressively sweet – a weight of glory.

Every time the power of God came, one or more souls entered the land of Beulah, the Canaan of perfect love. Some shouted, some laughed, some wept, and a large number lay prostrate from three to five hours, beyond the power of shouting or weeping. Hallelujah to the great God! Those present will never forget that night of refining and sanctifying power. What I received at the time Jesus sanctified my soul was only a drop in the bucket compared to

what it has since pleased him to impart. From that hour the deep and solid communion of my soul with God, and the rich baptisms of love and power, have been “unspeakable, and full of glory.” “Oh, matchless bliss of perfect love!

It lifts me up to things above;
It bears on eagles’ wings;
It gives my ravished soul a feast,
And makes me here a constant guest,
With Jesus, priests, and kings.”

At times I have had an overwhelming sense of the Divine presence, and a sacred unction has pervaded my whole being. Especially this has been my experience while called to defend this glorious salvation. Oh, how God has stood by and helped me in vindicating the doctrine and experience of holiness! I have often felt if there were but one man in the world to stand up for holiness, in God’s name I would be that man. So long as I can move my tongue or pen I must testify to this sweet constraining love of Christ.

There was a divine fragrance and sweetness imparted to my soul when the Saviour cleansed and filled it with pure love, that has ever remained with me, and I trust it ever will. I make a record of this to the glory of God. Glory, honor, and eternal praise be to his blessed name, forever and ever! His own arm hath brought salvation to my feeble, helpless soul. And I do love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, and strength. Yet I am nothing, and Jesus is my all. Sweet portion! Oh, the blessedness of this inward, spiritual kingdom! Oh, the depths of solid peace my soul has felt! It has often been

“A sacred awe which dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love.”

To know that God is mine; to feel that he dwells in my heart, rules my will, my affections, my desires; to know that he loves me ten thousand times better than I love him, -- oh, what solid bliss is this!

As I now look back over the twenty-one beautiful years since that eventful hour,

“Oh, how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare
That glows within my ravished heart!
But thou canst read it there.”

During these consecrated years I have had time, and every variety of circumstances, to test the genuineness of my submission and the saving power of God, and I am constrained to say, I know “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.” I state it with the most profound conviction of its truth, as well as of my own weakness and unworthiness. Oh, that I could describe my feelings of gratitude and love as I review the amazing grace and power of God! Truly,

“I stand all bewildered with wonder,
And gaze on an ocean of love;
While over its waves to my spirit,
Comes peace like a heavenly dove.”

In the purified soul, the flow of joy is deeper and steadier than ever before. It breathes an atmosphere of purity, and is conscious that its entire inner being has been cleansed, and harmonized by Christ himself. Someone has beautifully said, “This pure love is the same in nature, sweetness, and power, whether it be in David on the hill of Zion, Moses in the wilderness, or Paul in Athens.

The same in the seraphic Fletcher at Madely, Wesley in London, in Fenelon at St. Sulpitius, or Madam Guyon in the Bastille. Like its author, it is forever the same, in all lands, whether on the banks of the Po, the Thames, or the Tiber, - in London, in Jerusalem, in New York. Whether possessed amid the grandeur and beauty of the Alps, in the

cottages of the Waldensian mountains, or scattered along the more beautiful rivers, over the broader plains of our own loved America.

Names, sects, parties have no power to change it. It is the same under all forms of government and in every dispensation; it is the image and likeness of God, the 'kingdom of God within you,' 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' "

It is the richest gift of God to man. It sweetens this bitter cup of life, and lessens its sorrows; it smooths the rough places over which we travel, and lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It will go with us to the last. It will bless us while living, bless us when dying, and then melt away in the light of heaven forever. Nothing but love can enter heaven. Pure love is the key that will unlock the pearly gates, and give us a right the tree of life that is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Some of the precious results of the cleansing power of Jesus in my soul have been: --

1. A sacred nearness to God my Saviour. The distance between God and my soul has appeared annihilated, and the glory and presence of divinity have often appeared like a flood of sunlight, surrounding, penetrating, and pervading my whole being. Glory be to God that even the most unworthy may be "brought nigh by the blood of Christ."
2. A sense of indescribable sweetness in Christ. The fact that he is "the rose of Sharon;" "the lily of the valley;" "the brightness of his [the Father's] glory," and "altogether lovely," has at times so penetrated my soul as to thrill and fill it with ecstatic rapture. How lovely has the dear Saviour appeared to my soul and how strong the attraction my heart has felt toward him! How I love him!

"When on my new-fledged wings I rise,
To tread those shores beyond the skies,
What object first shall strike my eyes?
And where shall I begin my joys?
I'll run through every golden street,
And ask each blissful soul I meet,
Where is the God, whose praise you sing?
Oh, lead a stranger to your King."

Often his glory has shone upon my soul without a cloud. No language can describe the blessedness and sweetness of this state.

3. A deep, realizing sense of spiritual things. Bible truth has appeared transformed into solid realities. The doctrines of the gospel have become to me tangible facts and my soul has triumphed in them as eternal verities.
4. A surprising richness and fullness of meaning in the Scriptures, which I had not before realized.

Many portions of the word, which I had hitherto but little understood, now appeared full of meaning, and exceedingly precious. The following passages have been applied many times to my soul with great power: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." -- "If a man love me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." -- "But if we walk in the light, as is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from sin." -- "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

5. A triumph over temptation more complete and habitual. When Satan comes he finds the sympathies and affinities of my soul strongly against him; hence he receives no favorable response.

Before, I often found elements in my heart siding with the tempter, and felt at all was not right within. There

appeared to be an aching void, or a place in my soul which grace had never reached; but since Jesus sent the refining fire through and through my poor heart, I have been sweetly assured that grace has permeated every faculty and fibre my being, and scattered light, love, and saving power through every part. Oh, the beauty, the loveliness, the sweetness of heart-purity!

6. A great increase in spiritual power. This I have realized in my closet devotions, in my pastoral duties, and especially in the ministrations of the blessed truth. Blessed be the Lord, I have learned by experience that men may receive the Holy Ghost in measure limited only by their capacity to receive, and feeble ability to endure. God could easily bless men beyond the power of the body endure and live, if he were disposed to take them to heaven in that way. This increase of power has delivered me from all slavish fear of man, or of future evil. It has given me such love to the Saviour and to his glorious gospel as to make all my duties sweet and delightful. Truly, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."
7. A clear and distinct witness of purity through the blood of Jesus. The testimony of the Holy Spirit, and of my own spirit, to the entire sanctification of my soul has been more clear and convincing than any I ever had of my regeneration; although I had no doubt of that for years before the Lord extirpated inbred sin from my soul. "Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight."
8. A disposition to tell the blessed story of Christ: and his "great salvation." O for a thousand seraph tongues to publish the glad tidings to perishing men! Dear reader, I wish I could tell you how clear and sweet the light of purity has shown through the very depths of my soul, the complete satisfaction I have realized since I obtained this pearl of great price! But it can never be told! Its fullness, its richness, and its sweetness can never be expressed.

You can know it only by experience, and this is your solemn duty and most exalted privilege. Will you not seek it? Will you not begin now? A holy life is the happiest life, the easiest life, and the safest life you can live. Be persuaded to settle the matter at once, and begin now to seek for purity, and never yield the struggle until you obtain the glorious victory.

The struggle may be severe, but victory will be yours, if you only persevere. When you have once become fully decided that you will never cease consecrating, praying, and believing until you have obtained the blessing you will have surmounted your greatest difficulty, and it will not be long before the streams of pure love will flow through the depths of your soul.

But, in seeking for this priceless blessing, do not attempt to measure yourself by any thing peculiar in the experience of the writer, or of any other person. (See Section IX., question 107.) The Bible is our only rule of faith and practice. There are various operations of the Spirit in effecting the same work in the human heart. In this narrative of my religious experience I have endeavored to give a simple statement of facts, regardless of what mistaken good men or wicked men may think or say.

I would as soon deny God as to flee before the offense of the cross, or quail under the reproach of Christ. Like Peter and John, I "can not but speak the things which I have seen and heard." I fully believe, to continue in the enjoyment of perfect love, I must confess the whole, and take the consequences. Call it delusion who may; a blessed reality it is to my soul. I know it; I feel it; I have proved it, and I must declare it; and, in the nature of things, I shall be jealous of my own testimony if it does not stir up the devil. During the earlier years of my religious experience, I feared lest I should profess too much, or more than I possessed; but since the Saviour cleansed and filled my soul with perfect love, I have had no fears in that regard. The intense sweetness, the superior excellence, and the divine glory of the perfect love of Jesus can never be exaggerated, nor, indeed, fully described. Thousands in the church of God, who have received this baptism of love and power, can testify that the most glowing description any mortal can give of it, falls infinitely short of the reality.

When any soul can truthfully say with Mrs. President Edwards: "My soul is filled and overwhelmed with light, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost," there is no danger of exaggeration.

With the blessed doctrine and experience of purity, I am more and more impressed, charmed, and satisfied. Under its quickening power and light, I am amazed, humbled, and delighted. O, that I may enjoy it more fully, live it more perfectly, and preach and teach more clearly, and in every way, by tongue, and pen, and life, do more for its

promotion! I expect to preach it as long as I preach any thing, and when I cease preaching it, expect to be in heaven. In looking over these twenty-one years, I see much to humble me in the dust.

I might have written much more in regard to my weakness, unworthiness, and imperfections, and would have done so, had I supposed it would honor Christ more than to write about the fullness of his grace, and the riches of his love. I have tried with all humility to look to God for guidance, and have felt his blessing resting upon me while writing.

My experience is not my own; and it is in the hope that my humble testimony to the fullness and freeness of the grace bestowed upon me, the most unworthy, may encourage and lead others to avail themselves of the fullness in Jesus, that I record my experience of the perfect love of Christ. I have given but a brief and imperfect sketch, a mere outline, of the mercies that the Lord has heaped upon his poor servant. To him be all the glory.

Dear Christian reader, seek holiness. At all hazards seek it. Expect no rest until your soul is made “free indeed in the blood of Jesus. When once you have tasted the blessedness of purity, you will never be able to be sufficiently thankful that you were induced to seek it. If you do not seek it, the period is not distant when you will never be able to forgive yourself for the neglect.

And now, “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” CONCLUSION

In conclusion, dear reader, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” And “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

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