

## The Absolute Basics of the Wesleyan Way – Chapter 9

1. This chapter is on *entire sanctification / Christian Perfection*. Historically this has probably been the most distinctive teaching in our tradition.
  - a. Have you heard much teaching or preaching on this doctrine during your time in Methodist churches?
  - b. What do you feel when you hear the phrase “Christian Perfection?” Does this sound attractive? Unattractive? Why?
2. The authors write, “John Wesley had high expectations about the power of God’s grace. Wesley was convinced that the way of salvation leads somewhere beyond what you could ever ask or imagine.”
  - a. The last bit of this is built from the language of Ephesians 3:20 where Paul prays, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...” Who is the “him” Paul has in mind here? What kind of work can you imagine God doing in your life? What could it look like for God to do *more* than what you can imagine?
  - b. From what you’ve imagined God could do in your life, now imagine what God could do in the lives of some of the people you know, both people you know personally and maybe people you only know of. What can God do in their lives? How can you be a part of what God wants to do in their lives?
  - c. Can you imagine not sinning? Can you imagine defeating any persistent patterns of sin in your life?
  - d. What would “defeating sin” look like in terms of sins of commission? In terms of sins of omission?
3. It’s worth backing up a bit in Ephesian 3. Consider v. 16-19; “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”
  - a. Because of his talk of “perfection,” Wesley was often taken to be claiming Christians could be sinless and error free. Wesley consistently emphasized

that the perfection he preached was a perfection “in love.” What do you see in this Ephesians 3 text that supports such a position?

- b. Consider the idea of “knowing something that surpasses knowledge.” This shows two senses of “know.” Paul’s praying that they – and we! – will *experience* the love of Christ that passes comprehension. It’s through this *experience* of God that the Spirit makes “perfection” possible.
  - c. The end result envisaged in Paul’s prayer is that we be filled with “all the fullness of God.” When you hear the phrase “Christian perfection,” the idea of “not sinning” is partly in view, but even more it’s this being filled with the life of God, a positive, not a negative. What would your life look like if this were to happen? How would our churches be different if this became common?
4. Consider this hymn by Charles Wesley. How closely do the prayers in this hymn fit your own experience of life in Christ? What would our lives look like if we thought and felt this way?

1. I want a principle within  
Of jealous, godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near.  
I want the first approach to feel  
Of pride or fond desire,  
To catch the wand'ring of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.

2. From Thee that I no more may part,  
No more Thy goodness grieve,  
The filial awe, the fleshly heart,  
The tender conscience, give.  
Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make;  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,  
And keep it still awake.

3. Almighty God of truth and love,  
To me Thy pow'r impart;  
The mountain from my soul remove,  
The hardness from my heart.  
Oh, may the least omission pain  
My reawakened soul,  
And drive me to that blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole.