Preach Holiness with Power

1. The Hungry Heart
2. Contemporary band Sidewalk Prophets’ lyrics of “Keep Making Me,” especially vs. two and chorus

**Keep Making Me**

Make me broken

So I can be healed

‘Cause I’m so calloused

And now I can’t feel

I want to run to You

With heart wide open

Make me broken

Make me empty

So I can be filled

‘Cause I’m still holding

Onto my will

And I’m completed

When You are with me

Make me empty

*[Chorus:]*

‘Til You are my one desire

‘Til You are my one true love

‘Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making me

Make me lonely

So I can be Yours

‘Til I want no one

More than You, Lord

‘Cause in the darkness

I know You will hold me

Make me lonely

*[Chorus]*

‘Til You are my one desire

‘Til You are my one true love

‘Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making,

I know You’ll keep making

Lord, please keep making me

Songwriters: Ben McDonald / David Frey / Sam Mizell

Keep Making Me lyrics © Mike Curb Music, Music Services, Inc, Warner Chappell Music, Inc

1. V. Raymond Edman, former president of Wheaton College, in his book, *They Found the Secret*, reports the deeper life of twenty great Christians. They range from Oswald Chambers to Frances Havergal to Andrew Murray. He discovers a pattern:

The pattern seems to be: self-centeredness, self-effort, increasing inner dissatisfaction and outer discouragement, a temptation to give it all up because there is no better way; and then finding the Spirit of God to be their strength, their guide, their confidence and companion—in a word, their life.

The crisis of the deeper life is the key that unlocks the secret of their transformation…

It is new life for old. It is rejoicing for weariness, and radiance for dreariness. It is strength for weakness, and steadiness for uncertainty. It is triumph even through tears, and tenderness of heart instead of touchiness. It is lowliness of spirit instead of self-exaltation, and loveliness of life because of the presence of the altogether Lovely One.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Perhaps surprising, even Brennan Manning has said, “Human nature, freed from the slavery of sin, is capable of awesome holiness.” Quoted in Donald Metz, *Scaling the Heights* (Olathe, KS: Wesleyan Heritage Press, 2004), p. 48.
2. Holiness preachers – Will you answer the need expressed by contemporary band Sidewalk Prophets and 20 Christians from past history—and others today going through the same struggle? Or will we say nothing and let these Christians suffer in their continued defeat?

II. The Purpose of Preaching

1. Every sermon should begin in Jerusalem and end in Kansas City or begin in Kansas City and end in Jerusalem. Or begin in the Bible and end in life.
2. There is a difference between the theme of a sermon and the purpose of the sermon. The theme tells you what the sermon is about. The purpose tells you what you want the sermon to do. Early in your sermon preparation write out one crisp sentence of what you want your sermon to do. Examples: to show love to difficult family members, to turn from sin and receive Christ, to take a place of service in the church, to seek and find deep internal cleansing and receive the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit.
3. Eddie Estep wrote honestly in the Kansas City district newsletter of Jan. 17, 2022, of his earlier preaching struggles. He was able to move to a rich blend of American Holiness Movement and Wesleyan theology. It is a very worthwhile blend. But it will be important to work out any of these tensions in the study and in prayer. When we come to the pulpit, we must come with a clear conclusive message that will change people.
4. The purpose of any sermon is to change people. Every sermon should make your people more Christlike. Paul said, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Corinthians 5:20-21, NIV). Note the thrust of persuasion in it.
5. The Most Common Question
6. In the nearly 900 revivals I have conducted in my 66 years of preaching, there is a single question I have been asked repeatedly. It is: “Rev. Shaver, I’ve heard about this sanctification, but it is so complicated I can’t understand it.”
7. Thus, I am determined to make this truth understandable. I will be Biblical, logical, and clear.
8. I do this a great deal by illustration. Throughout my thoughts in this presentation, I will give examples of my illustrations. When I am preaching on Romans 7:21-8:4, I explain the value of moving from the Old Testament law of God as in the Ten Commandments to the new “law of the Spirit.” I would say:

The Ten Commandments told you what you should do but gave you no power to do it. Most Americans do not like to be told what to do. I can think of a command I could give you that you would love to do. Imagine next Sunday I am asked to preach the Sunday morning message in your church, and I preach until two o’clock in the afternoon (perish the thought). Then I give you this command, “Go to lunch now.” Most of you would love to obey my command because the internal law of hunger written all over your stomach would rise up to embrace the outward command.

Many Christians act like being a Christian is God telling me what to do. I respond, “I don’t want to do it, I hate it, but (grudgingly) I’ll do it because I don’t want to get in trouble with God.” No, no—that’s not it. It is living in the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:27 (NIV), “I will put my Spirit in you, and move you to follow my decrees...” God’s Holy Spirit in you causes you to want to do what God wants you to do. He so changes you on the inside that you can say with the Psalmist, “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (40:8, NRSV). This is the “law of the Spirit who gives life” (Romans 8:2, NIV).

1. Why I Preach Holiness
2. Because it is Biblical truth.

* I Thessalonians 5:23-24
* Ephesians 3:14-21
* Acts 26: 17-18
* I Peter 1:2

…and more

1. Because it has helped my spiritual life so profoundly. Here is my testimony:

God Sanctified Me!

*“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.”*

*I Thessalonians 5:23*

No question about it. I knew God had saved me! On that November 20th night, my sins were forgiven. Christ entered the center of my life. God became real, love and joy and peace became my major emotions. I continued a day-by-day living relationship with Jesus. The Bible became an exciting book. I was receiving prayer answers, by grace I resisted old temptations. I was in church every time the door was opened. I was telling others what Jesus had done for me and bringing my friends to church.

Six months later, I was in crisis. Despite the continual relationship with God and blessings from God, ugly tempers began to arise from the basement of my soul. Certain people, even Christian friends, would rub me the wrong way. I knew a Christian should be loving, so I would grit my teeth and clench my jaw and say, “Make yourself love him!” But I couldn’t do it. Bitterness, resentment, impatience, jealousy, pride began rising up from deep within me. Along with that, I sensed a lack of spiritual power—though I was sharing my faith with many, few were being changed. I wondered, “Is this the best my Christianity can be?”

Then some glimmers of light began to break through to me. I heard it in a sermon, read it in the Bible, heard it in a song, caught it in a personal testimony. I began to hear words like “entire sanctification,” to be “filled with the Spirit,” “purity of heart,” to be “crucified with Christ,” “the rest of faith,” “full cleansing.” Daily, consistently I prayed for God’s answer to my dilemma.

Then on September 2nd, I was in a Sunday night service. God spoke to my heart and prompted me to go forward to kneel at an altar of prayer. God spoke to me, “What have you been praying for all this time?” I responded, “Lord, sanctify me.”

Suddenly what seemed like an electric shock went all through my body and I was face down on the floor. I was so weak (though I was a completely healthy 21-year-old) that I thought I was going to die. Then I realized, “That’s exactly what’s going to happen. The ‘old Chic Shaver’ is going to die.”

Surrendering all of my forgiven life back to God, asking Him to “crucify” the remaining core of self-centeredness, I attempted to reach out to believe God for the answer. Upon the urging of Christian friends, I gathered all my faith and believed God to sanctify me.

The most amazing peace and joy flooded my heart. My strength suddenly returned. And oh, the love, I stood and testified God had just sanctified me through and through. Immediately, a man in the congregation rushed forward to seek God. There was spiritual power. I went home singing Charles Wesley’s “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” and sang it repeatedly over the next 24 hours.

My self-centeredness had gone to the cross. God had sanctified me 100%. The Spirit had filled me. My Christian life lifted to a whole new level. I still had many lessons to learn about the continual “walk in the Spirit,” and I’m still learning. But I had entered a land called “victory.” I’m still living there and exploring new territory in that land.

Today I am experiencing some of the most exciting days of my spiritual life. In the language of Galatians 5:25, “Since I am living by the Spirit, I am keeping in step with the Spirit” (paraphrase).

1. I long for others to experience the same deliverance and victory I have experienced. It would be criminal for me to withhold this truth from them.
2. Impact of Translations
3. Be aware that certain translations or paraphrases will regularly use the phrase “to make holy” in place of “to sanctify” feeling it improves the translation to make an explanation of the word. There is some value in this, but it lacks the specificity, impact, and emphasis on divine action of the words “to sanctify.”
4. When Dr. Ralph Earle, former New Testament professor, Nazarene Seminary, was chairman of one of the translation committees of the NIV, Mrs. Earle would go to her room and spend time on her knees asking God to guide the committee to accuracy, especially in the holiness passages.
5. Here are some comparisons.
6. I Thessalonians 5:23

* NIV – “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.”
* NLT – “Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way.”

1. Acts 26:18

* NIV – “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”
* NLT – “…power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.”

Often I will use both translations to amplify meaning.

1. Since I am not capable in the Greek of the New Testament, I rely on commentators who are.
2. In questionable issues over translations, I rely on the New Revised Standard version as a good corrective.
3. In certain situations, NLT can be very powerful as in Ephesians 4:22-24, “Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”
4. Significant Testimonies to the Deeper Life—Sanctification, Fullness of the Holy Spirit
5. J. Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*
6. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*
7. V. Raymond Edman, *They Found the Secret*
8. Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*
9. Robert Boyd Munger*, My Heart—Christ’s Home*
10. George Allen Turner, *Witnesses of the Way*
11. Sherwood Wirt, *After-Glow*
12. J. Sidlow Baxter, *His Deeper Work in Us*
13. Catherine Marshall, *Beyond Our Selves*, and *Something More*
14. Another Illustration

In Romans 8:1-4 (NIV, 1984), we read:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

“Set free” (v. 2) is a strong word, the same as in Romans 6:18 and 22, “set free from sin.” It is the form of the verb which indicates it was done in a moment. And it is personal—“me,” or in some translations, “you”—but, either way, it is good.

My mother was a remarkable woman. When she was 92, she prayed, “O Lord, when I get old, don’t let me get crabby.” At age 98, she sold her car. She lived radiantly until age 103. As she got into her 90’s, I made it a point to phone almost daily. At her age, I figured I should visit her as often as possible.

Now imagine this. It was a bitter cold January. I decided to visit her. I looked at my schedule. Three weeks were filled with revivals. I had only one week free. O—did I mention?—I lived in Kansas City, and she lived just outside Orlando. Let’s see—one week, 1300 miles—what if I walked, or even jogged? I couldn’t make it in a week because I have always been held down and even slowed by the law of gravity. I may as well give up.

One of my friends approached me: “Shaver, what’s wrong with you? You are being controlled by the law of gravity. Haven’t you heard about that other law—the law of aerodynamics? We have planes, even jets.” His words awakened me.

In a few hours, I was on a jet. As it sped down the runway, the law of gravity held it to the ground. Suddenly the mighty power of the jet, the law of aerodynamics, lifted it from the ground. In a few minutes I was at 30,000 feet. In three hours, a soft landing in Orlando.

In the spiritual realm, the law of the Spirit of life could set me free from the law of sin and death. By faith, I set my full confidence on the Spirit’s might power, and on September 2, 1956, He set me free from the law of sin and death. What a victory!

Continue with me. Verse 4 tells us that “the righteous requirements of the law ‘can’ be fully met in us.” But only to one group of people, those “who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” The NRSV says, “who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” “Walk” is a good translation, a good word. There is a moment to be set free by the Spirit, but then there is a whole life to be step by step with the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:25 says, “Keep in step with the Spirit.”

Now the imagination. Suppose I’m sitting on my high-flying jet, and I look around and say, “I don’t like the color scheme on this plane. When will they do a makeover? And then, the meals on this plane. When are peanuts and a Coke a meal? And I don’t think the people on this plane have paid me enough attention. Don’t they know how great I am? I don’t have to take it.” Just then I notice the emergency exit next to my seat. I’ve never flown, but I’m pretty smart. I’m sure I can. I open the emergency exit and jump out of the plane to fly on my own. I suddenly drop 30,000 feet to die on the red clay hills of Georgia. There is the one simple fact: whenever I remove myself from the law of aerodynamics, the only law left to control me is the law of gravity.

So, in the spiritual realm and in the life of the church, you have been set free from the law of sin and death by the sanctifying law of the Spirit. And then you get a little self-confident that you can make it. You get a little “ticked off” because the board voted for beige carpet when you voted bubble gum pink. You are disgusted at the quality of the food at the potlucks. For three potlucks in a row, your Aunt Matilda has failed to make your favorite blackberry cobbler. And then the people of the church—why are they not coming to you each Sunday to tell you how great you are? They are going to the visitors first. You may have been set free in the past, but you are no longer walking in the Spirit. Your only option when you step away from “the law of the Spirit” is to be taken over by “the law of sin and death.” Surrender to Him afresh. Be set free by the Spirit from the law of sin and death, but then walk day by day, moment by moment, by the Spirit.

1. Other Terms for the Deeper Life
2. Do not be confined in your holiness preaching only to the terms, “sanctification,” “fullness of the Spirit,” “holiness.” There is a broad array of other terms that describe sanctification from different viewpoints:
3. In James 4:8, it is “purify your hearts, you double-minded.”
4. In I John 4:17-18, it is “perfect love drives out fear.”
5. In Hebrews 4:10-11, it is “God’s rest.”
6. In Hebrews 6:1, it is “go on toward perfection” (NRSV).
7. In Romans 6:18, it is “you have been set free from sin.”
8. In Romans 8:2, it is “the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”
9. In Galatians 2:20, it is “I have been crucified with Christ.”
10. In Ephesians 3:14-21, it is “he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” and “you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Corrie Ten Boom said, “when he tells us to love our enemies, He gives us along with the command, the love itself” (Metz, p. 79). See Romans 5:5.

1. Robert Boyd Munger, a godly Presbyterian, is most famous for his booklet, *My Heart—Christ’s Home*. Pointing out that the best translation for Ephesians 3:17 may be “that Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts through faith,” he takes the reader through the rooms of his heart. For example, the dining room is the room of appetites and desires. The final room is a hall closet in which there are some dead things, and the closet is kept locked. Christ wants the key and wishes to enter the closet to cleanse it.

Dr. Munger was teaching a class I was taking at Fuller Seminary. He invited me to lunch with him after class. At lunch he said to me, “Chic, how come Nazarenes teach sanctification as a crisis experience? All other Christians know it is progressive.”

I replied, “Dr. Munger, in your book *My Heart—Christ’s Home,* when the Christian finally surrenders the hall closet, and Christ enters and cleanses the closet, does that happen in a moment, or is it a process?”

Emphatically, he said, “O, that happens in a moment.”

I responded, “That’s what we’re talking about. There is a moment of full surrender and cleansing. We call that entire sanctification. I’ve preached your story of the heart all over the nation and seen hundreds of people come forward to get on their knees and pray to surrender their hearts to Christ’s full cleansing and control.”

Dr. Munger burst into tears, so strongly I thought his tears would hit me. He realized we believed the same thing. There is a moment of full surrender and Christ’s total control. The actual statement in his book is, “He…entered it [hall closet], took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there and threw it away. Then he cleansed the closet, painted it, fixed it up, doing it all in a moment’s time” (underlining mine).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Yes, there is a place for process and crisis in regard to sanctification. Note when we talked it through together, we believed the same thing. And across the denominations there may be many like that.

1. Two Issues for Another Day
2. Seekers taking necessary time to search their hearts and be searched by the Spirit in order to truly experience entire sanctification.
3. Effective altar work that leads a seeker in understanding, and prayer time allowing sufficient time for the seeker to come to assurance.
4. Crisis and Process

Crisis and process are both parts of the sanctifying work of God—making us more Christlike, more holy.

God clearly sanctified me and filled me with His Spirit in a moment of time on September 2, 1956. Yet His Spirit has continued to work on me through the years. In my first twenty years of living, I had cut some pretty strong emotional and habit pattern channels that needed reprogramming (Romans 12:1-2, renewing of the mind).

Please understand that my sanctification experience cleansed me from bitterness, resentment, pride, and other ungodly attitudes. I had a clear witness that this work was done. Yet I continued a struggle with impatience which had been a deeply cut channel in my life. One day when I was driving to seminary to teach my classes, I was traveling residential 63rd St. in a 25-mile-per-hour zone. The man in front of me began slowing down—20 mph, then 15, then 6, finally stopped right in front of me. I wondered why he stopped and noticed him looking to the right of his car. Oh, he had discovered a garage sale. Suddenly, I clearly heard the Holy Spirit say to me, “Give him a little room.” Yes, I thought, I’ve got my schedules, plans, interests—but so does he. I can give him a little room. A hundred times since then, that event comes back to me. And oh, how my patience has grown with people. I consider this part of the sanctifying process.

But I must keep an important place for the crisis. It is a crisis because it is a miraculous work by God—not our human achievement. “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through” (I Thessalonians 5:23). It is by teaching people to expect this great moment with God that openness and expectation of God’s miracle is created. Since the word “crisis” denotes tragic circumstances to many, perhaps we should call this “a great and my deepest encounter with God.”

In 1771, John Wesley spoke of his distinguishing doctrinal experience.

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 intercourse to do the same. Ten years after, God gave me a clearer view than I ever had before of the way to obtain 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, and in print, and God confirmed it by a thousand witnesses. I have continued to declare this for above thirty years, and God has continued to confirm my work.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Wesley not only believed entire sanctification was Biblical experience, he was also and observer to what God the Spirit was doing in the lives of people. In a sermon, he said:

After interviewing 652 members of the society who were exceeding clear in their experience, and of whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt…all who believe they are sanctified declare with one voice that the change was wrought in a moment. I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an instantaneous work.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Another Illustration

Ephesians 5:18 tells the Ephesian Christians and us, “Be filled with the Spirit.” The word “filled” is in the present tense. It means, “Keep filled with the Spirit.”

See this water glass I hold in my hand? Imagine I should come to your door, and you know me and trust me. I knock, we greet each other, and I say, “Could I have a glass of water?” “Why sure, Pastor Shaver,” you say, and you lead me to the faucet at your kitchen sink. I turn on the faucet—the glass is half full, two thirds full, three quarters full, full right to the top. I turn off the faucet, set the glass on the counter and exclaim with excitement, “The glass is full, the glass is full!” I’m so excited about this that I walk into your family room and see another adult watching the evening news on TV. I exclaim, “The glass is full!” This is so big a thing that I go out into your neighborhood and, for a week, tell everyone I meet, “The glass is full!”

I come back to your kitchen counter after a week to check on the glass. In disappointment, I see the glass is no longer full. By a slow process of evaporation, water has left the glass.

Now imagine I come back to you with another glass—same size, same make as the first one. I ask you for another glass of water. I go to the same faucet. The glass is filling—half full, two thirds, three quarters, full to the top. Yes! But instead of setting it on the counter, I keep it constantly under the faucet with the water flowing. There may be some evaporation, but the source of supply is always greater than the power of evaporation. The glass keeps full.

Many Christians have experienced a “great and deepest encounter with God” and are filled with the Spirit at a moment in time. But all they seem to do is to point back to that moment they were filled, and they have been evaporating.

Have you been filled with the Spirit? Have you kept filled with the Spirit? Are you filled this moment? That’s why old-timers in the church used to say, “Keep under the spout where the glory comes out.” Once filled, keep at the place of divine supply. Keep in the Word, keep praying, keep obeying, keep walking in the light, keep witnessing, keep giving, keep loving. Keep filled with the Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:19-21, it’s: keep praising, keep thanking, keep submitting—channels for spiritual overflow.

A lady ran up to her pastor and exclaimed, “My cup overflows, my cup overflows, what should I do?” He said, “Go and slosh it on somebody.” Right now, in my spiritual life, I am rejoicing as I’m living in Galatians 5:25, “Keep in step with the Spirit.”

1. Fresh Case History

During the months I was seeking the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit, I attended Sunday night services where we had lay testimonies. Three or four times, Mrs. Marsden would stand and report how God had sanctified her and was working in her life. And her face glowed. It was a factor in my eventual sanctification.

A few years ago, a denominational leader said to me, “We need a lot of fresh case history” in regard to sanctification. We have past historical reports of Phineas Bresee, Samuel Logan Brengle, Charles Finney, Hudson Taylor, E. Stanley Jones, Frances Ridley Havergal. Here are recent testimonies of lay people I have known personally:

*Isabel*: A few days after she saw her friend accept Christ, Isabel testified, “When I started this class, I was afraid to present the gospel. Now that God has sanctified me, I’m not afraid anymore. I am confident, excited, and more alert to my opportunities.”

*Kathy*: Slowly, I arrived at a place of understanding that my heavenly Father would never harm me and that I could trust his authority over me. In fact, it was something I desired! All that was left were the details. I remember asking at the altar, “Is there anything else you want me to give you?” I continued asking that question until God’s silence and my deep peace assured me there was nothing else. I experienced entire sanctification as a one-time spiritual-crisis-point decision, and continue to experience it as an ongoing decision to live my life as God wants me to. The great thing about it all is that with the intimate, loving communion we have, it’s also the way I want to live!

*Keith*: How could I be a believer and follower of Christ if my natural instinct was to curse and grumble? So, I started to look for what was missing. I searched for answers, but it seemed like I had all the bases covered: believe, tithe, serve—yet nothing in my nature changed. Then, near the end of July 2008, our church needed some custodial help while a few of the regulars were out. I remember thinking that was way below my status, but I begrudgingly volunteered to take a shift. During Sunday worship on July 27, 2008, I ran into the retired former head custodian. I jokingly told him I was going to take his old job and asked him, “How do you handle this?”

He told me that he considered his custodial job a ministry and that he was working for God: “If Christ can die on a cross for me, I can surely clean up a church for him.”

His words hung in the air and surrounded me. And then it happened. I felt hot, cold, empty, and full inside all at the same time. I knew I needed to be a custodian. Problems became situations to help; situations became opportunities to do something; my chores became acts of service. I realized that God used a custodian to open my eyes and heart to his fullness. So, when people ask me how I am “fixed with the Lord,” I tell them I am filled with the Spirit, and I let God take charge of things.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Here is the testimony of a significant spiritual leader.

Sherwood Wirt, former editor of *Decision* magazine, testified to his experience of sanctification: “I don’t know just how the love came in, but I know that all the bitterness I held against others…disappeared. Resentment—hostility—hurt feelings—you name it. They all dissolved. Evaporated. Went.[[6]](#footnote-6)

And here is a recent testimony of a Georgia pharmacist, which is included in my recent book, *Living in the Blessing*.

**Chad’s Distress**

*But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.*

*Romans 7:23*

What is it like to be sanctified, filled with the Spirit? How does it happen? Here is how it happened to a young man named Chad, in his own words:

At age twenty-four, I graduated with my Doctor of Pharmacy degree and started my first job as a pharmacist in my hometown. I had a shiny new car, was making decent money, and had a beautiful girlfriend. I attended church as regularly as I could, but it was more of an obligation than anything. Over-all, things couldn’t have been better. I was as close as I had ever been to living the American dream; however, something big was missing from my life, as I would soon realize.

As my relationship with my girlfriend (now my wife), Celia, became more serious, we began to have deeper conversations about religion. We discovered that our viewpoints were a little different: I was a Baptist, and she was a Nazarene. If I’m totally honest, I had never heard of Nazarenes before, so I immediately saw my viewpoint as superior to hers due to the popularity of my denomination. I believed wholeheartedly that, once a person had been saved by God, there was nothing that could change that—not even my lifestyle. In my everyday life, I professed to be a Christian; yet, looking back, I see that my thoughts, behaviors, and actions were not very different from those of the non-Christians around me. I didn’t see this as a big deal, because “We’re all human after all!” There was apparent sin in my life, but I was under the impression that there was nothing I could do about it, so I continued along without much thought. However, I came to realize that Celia thought differently: she believed that we are called to live a life that is holy and pleasing to God and that, by the help of the Spirit of God, we can live above willful sin in our lives.

Needless to say, this disagreement quickly became a point of contention in our relationship. That’s when I realized that I could solve this problem. Being scientifically minded, I would research the Bible and gather as much “evidence” as possible to support my viewpoint, then present it to Celia in an indisputable way. I knew for a fact that I was right; I just needed to show her the “proof.” Once I did, she would not only be impressed, but the disagreement between us would be resolved. However, when I set out to unearth this “evidence,” I soon found something entirely different than what I was looking for.

In my searching, I discovered some recurring themes that I had never noticed before. I came across Scriptures such as the following:

* Mark 13:13—“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”
* John 15:6—“If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”
* Colossians 1:22-23—“You [are] holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation…IF you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.”
* Hebrews 10:26—“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.”
* I John 3:6—“No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.”

I could go on and on but suffice it to say that I became greatly overwhelmed by this clear overarching theme. For years I had only read the Scriptures in bits and pieces, but once I began to delve deeper, I found that this theme of continuing, remaining, and living without sin spanned the entire Bible. It became immediately evident to me that God does not intend for us to continue sinning after we are saved—and that there is much more to this Christian walk than being saved and then waiting on heaven. My original mission had backfired. Instead of finding proof that I was right, I began to see that I was wrong—and I sure dreaded having to admit that to Celia!

After this, I began to feel God’s clear call to holiness and a deeper relationship with him. Not coincidentally, I realized during this time that my life needed “cleaning up.” I wasn’t too awful in the world’s view—I didn’t abuse drugs or drink alcohol or hurt people. But I struggled with anger, pride, and selfishness, among other things. With this revelation from God, things began to change in my life. I began to get excited about the things of God because for the first time, I realized the importance of a relationship with him. I decided that I would begin to really live for God and hold up my end of this relationship! These were exciting days! However, I soon grew frustrated and annoyed because my efforts would fail. The old saying, “You don’t know how bad you are until you try to be good,” rang true for me. It seemed that no matter how hard I tried to change my ways, my thoughts, my behaviors, my habits, I couldn’t do it with any consistency. I related quite well to Paul’s words in Romans 7:18b-19, where he says, “For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.” I failed again and again and again.

**God’s Deliverance**

*It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.*

*I Thessalonians 4:3a*

*because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

*Romans 8:2*

Chad continues:

Day after day, I grew more and more discontented and angry, until one day, I finally reached a breaking point. I hit my knees in prayer and began to sob uncontrollably. I told God how frustrated I was and how I wanted to live for him, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t. I had simply decided that this holy life I had read about was not something I could achieve; it was obviously an impossible mandate, and, in my futile attempts, my heart was broken.

I’ll never forget what happened next. It was at this point I heard the Lord whisper to my heart, “No, you can’t do it—but I can.”

Suddenly, I was overcome with his presence and realized in a moment what I was missing; I was trying to do it all in my strength. I couldn’t change myself; I needed him to change me! And so, in that moment, I prayed for more of him. I admitted that I had tried with what strength I could muster, but it wasn’t enough—I needed his Spirit to help me. I had reached the end of me, and that’s right where I found him waiting. I surrendered my life and my will to the Lord that day—it’s a moment that I’ll never forget and always treasure.

Later, I would learn that this “surrender” goes by various names: entire sanctification, baptism of the Spirit, second work of grace, etc. But regardless of what you call it, I know this: from that moment on, I have been a totally different man. Something powerful happened to me, and, ever since then, I have hungered for the Lord in ways I never had before. I have communed with him daily and uninterruptedly, and my life was finally “cleaned up”—not by trying harder, but by surrendering to him daily and allowing his Spirit to have his way in my life. The things I struggled with back then just aren’t an issue anymore. I’m still walking as closely as I can to him as I’m led by the Spirit, and it’s made all the difference in the world in my life. I can definitely reflect back on that moment of crisis when I gave myself fully to God; however, I also have come to realize that holiness is very much a daily process. It’s vital that we reach a moment of surrender—but we must continue to stay surrendered every single day of our lives. I can say wholeheartedly through this experience that the only way to true, lasting spiritual victory is through God’s purification of our hearts through sanctification—and he is faithful to do it if we cooperated with his love and grace.

Months later, this desire to go deeper with God began to culminate into a call to ministry. I began to realize how all of this had come together in a way that only God can orchestrate. I had questions for God, obviously, but he has been faithful to answer every one along the way. When I asked him how I was supposed to be a pastor when I had just graduated from pharmacy school, God sent me a retired minister and former pharmacist who was in town for just a few months at just the right time. When I realized I couldn’t just quit my job as a pharmacist due to my student loans, God introduced me to a bivocational pastor. I began to realize for the first time that I could be a pharmacist and a pastor, so I continued my pursuit. While I was wrestling with the costs of seminary on top of my pharmacy school loans, God introduced me to another pastor who told me about a program called Course of Study, which would lead me toward ordination in a more cost-effective way than seminary. All along the way, God has answered my questions and doubts.

I’m now an ordained elder in the church, and I currently serve as a bivocational young adult pastor at a church in middle Georgia. I do not know what God has in store for me in the future, but I do know he is already there. His grace is truly sufficient, and, for that, I’m most thankful! To God be the glory![[7]](#footnote-7)

1. To Wrap This Up
2. Dallas Willard, best known for his writings on Christian spiritual formation, testifies, “The one book other than the Bible that has most influenced me is a little-known book by James Gilchrist Lawson called *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This book is filled with sanctification and Spirit-filled testimonies.
3. Richard Halverson, Presbyterian pastor, former chaplain of the United States Senate, reports that nine months after his conversion, he was given a copy of *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. It became daily spiritual nurture. He says, “No book except the Bible has influenced my walk with Christ at such deep and maturing levels. Nor has any influenced my preaching and teaching so much.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Chambers book is the most popular book of daily devotions ever published.

And what does Chambers say?

1. 26 references to sanctification
2. 9 references to holiness
3. 5 references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit
4. 17 references to crisis
5. Quotation like, “It is not a question of whether God is willing to sanctify me; is it *my* will? Am I willing to let God do in me all that has been made possible by the Atonement?”[[10]](#footnote-10) or “When we pray to be sanctified, are we prepared to face the standard for these verses?.... It will cost an intense narrowing of all our interest on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interest in God. Sanctification means intense concentration on God’s point of view…. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us…. Are we prepared to say—‘Lord, make me as holy as You can make a sinner saved by grace?’”[[11]](#footnote-11) or “Then there follows the second mighty work of grace—‘an inheritance among them which are sanctified.’”[[12]](#footnote-12)
6. The Word of God Again
7. I Peter 1:1-2—“To God’s elect…who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood….
8. I Peter 1:16—“Be holy, because I am holy.”
9. I Thessalonians 4:3—“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified.”
10. I Thessalonians 5:23-24—“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”
11. Hebrews 12:14—“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”
12. There are seventy references to the Holy Spirit’s activity in the book of Acts. There is overwhelming concern that each Christian be filled with the Spirit as in Acts 9:17—“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Spirit.”
13. What are We Waiting For?
14. So, if young adults are singing:

Make me empty

So I can be filled

‘Cause I’m still holding

Onto my will

And I’m completed

When You are with me

Make me empty

*[Chorus:]*

‘Til You are my one desire

‘Til You are my one true love

‘Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making me

1. If the consistent pattern in many Christians is a discouraging self-centeredness
2. If we can be capable of an “awesome holiness”
3. If a major purpose of preaching is to help people experience the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit
4. If thousands are saying, “Explain sanctification”
5. If Ezekiel promised that God would put “His Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees”
6. If sanctification is Biblical truth
7. If “the God of peace will sanctify you through and through”
8. If multiplied books carry the reports of *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*
9. If the “law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death”
10. If the “righteous requirements of the Law might be fully met in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit”
11. If the Word of God is filled with multiple terms to describe this life of victory
12. If the Presbyterian Robert Munger says, “O, that happens in a moment”
13. If this Spirit-filled life provides new channels by an ongoing “renewing of our mind”
14. If entire sanctification is instantaneous, then it is only and obviously a miracle of God
15. If Wesley says, “we are made holy by faith,” and testified to this for more than thirty years
16. If 652 members of Wesley’s ‘societies’ reported “the change was wrought in a moment”
17. If we “keep under the spout where the glory comes out,” we can keep full of the Spirit
18. If Isabel, and Kathy, and Keith all testify God sanctifies, the Spirit fills
19. If Sherwood Wirt, editor of *Decision* magazine, said his resentment “evaporated”
20. If the Georgia pharmacist, Chad, set out to prove his girlfriend it was wrong for her to think you could lead a holy life, and began intense Bible study to prove it; when the truth of the Word and the condition of his self-centered heart gripped him, he experienced the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit
21. If significant spiritual formation author Dallas Willard says that, next to the Bible, the book that has most influenced him is *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*
22. If Presbyterian Richard Halverson, former chaplain of the United States Senate, says that next to the Bible, he has been most influenced by Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest*
23. If *My Utmost for His Highest* is the most popular devotional book in the world and is overflowing with calls to entire sanctification and the fullness of the Spirit
24. And, if God’s Holy Word repeatedly calls Christians to a deeper life—“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (I Thessalonians 4:3)

Then, what are we waiting for? Instead of tiptoeing around this issue, let us go all out to preach holiness with power to cure remaining self-centeredness, fill people with perfect love, and empower by the filling of the Spirit. As a matter of fact, God has raised up those we call the “holiness people” to sound the call and let the church world know there is a life of victory. Let us be Biblical, clear, practical, and experiential. Even more than our dismay at those failing to preach holiness, let our joyous, happy, fulfilling experience of what God has done in us result in winsome proclamation of what Peter called “the sanctifying work of the Spirit” (I Peter 1:1-2).

1. V. Raymond Edman, *They Found the Secret* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Robert Boyd Munger, *My Heart—Christ’s Home* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Quoted in Mrs. Charles Cowman, *Streams in the Desert* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 366. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. From “Sermon: On Patience,” in *Great Holiness Classics,* Vol. 2: *The Wesley Century*, T. Crichton Mitchell, ed. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1984), 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Chic Shaver, *Living in the Blessing* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2022), 436-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Shaver, 436. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Shaver, 464-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Dallas Willard, “A Cloud of Witnesses,” in *High Calling*, ed. Stan Key (Francis Asbury Society, March-April 2016), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 1963), Introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Chambers, Oct. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Chambers, Feb. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Chambers, Jan. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)