

Holiness teachings

From the editorial writings of the late:

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CHAPTER 1

A SUMMARY

We propose to examine this all important subject in the light of the Bible. One plain text of the Scriptures proves more than a thousand human assertions.

The words sanctification and holiness, as used in the Bible, mean the same thing. The same Greek word, *hagiasmos*, is translated in our Bible, sometimes by the word, holiness, and sometimes by the word, sanctification. The same is true of the word translated sometimes holy, and sometimes saint. The original is one and the same word.

1. Holiness implies, in common with a state of justification, or pardon, victory over outward sin. A person that is holy does not commit sin. This is also true of one who lives justified before God. "For sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace." That is, grace has the mastery over you. In the struggle between grace and sin, grace triumphs.

*"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."--
1 John 3:9*

But, "Sin is the transgression of the law." So that he who imagines that he enjoys the blessing of holiness, and yet does what God in his word forbids, or neglects to do what he commands, is deceived. His so-called faith is fatal presumption.

2. Holiness is a state. It does not consist of a repetition of good acts, but is the gracious condition of the soul which prompts to the performance of all good actions. It is the pure fountain from which pure water continually flows.

Proof: "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." -- I Peter 1:16.

This does not say, Do holy things, but BE HOLY.

"To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness." -- I Thess. 3:13

It is the heart that is to be established; then the habits will be right, of course. These texts show that holiness is a state, and not merely good habits, much less simply a relation.

3. Holiness implies deliverance from all wrong dispositions, tempers and desires; and from all inclination to indulge those that are right, in an unlawful manner, or to an inordinate degree. There are dispositions of the soul that are wrong in themselves, such as anger, pride, and covetousness. From all wrong tempers a holy person is so far delivered that he not only does not yield to them, but he does not feel them. Other desires become sinful only when indulged in an unlawful manner, or to an inordinate degree. Our Saviour hungered. In this he did not sin, but he would have sinned, if he had yielded to the temptations of Satan to satisfy His hunger in an unlawful manner. Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters. In a holy person all his powers of body and mind are brought into harmony with the will of God.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” -- I Thess. 5:23.

This prayer teaches:

1. That the body is so far sanctified as to be blameless. For it must be so, before it can be preserved in that state. Hence, when the victim of the use of tobacco, or of strong drink, is sanctified, his body undergoes such a change, through the power of the Spirit of God, that he no longer feels the terrible cravings for indulgences, which were fast hastening him on to destruction.
2. The affections, passions, desires, and propensities are so subdued that they are the occasion of good, and not of harm.
3. The intellect, the judgment, the will and the imagination, are made pure and holy in all their exercises.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” -- II Cor. 7:1.

Here we see that holiness is opposed to all filthiness, either of body or mind. It removes from soul and body everything that defiles.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do

mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." -- Rom. 8:12, 13.

He that does not live after the flesh, does not bring forth the works of the flesh.

These are: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditious, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." -- Gal. 5:19-21.

They who are holy are led by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, which is:

"Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." -- Gal. 5:22, 23.

4. Holiness is distinct from justification, and subsequent to it. When one is converted, he is so far made holy that he has victory over sin. But sin remains, though it does not reign.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." -- I Cor. 3:1.

These persons were "brethren," "babes in Christ." Therefore they were justified, they were not sinners, or backsliders, yet they were carnal -- not yet made holy. A celebrated minister of the Gospel, suddenly attacked by disease, was recommended to drink brandy. He took a small quantity, and being unused

to it, its effects were painfully visible. He was drunk, yet not a drunkard. So these believers were carnal -- there were divisions among them, as is too often the case, over the respective merits of their favorite preachers -- yet they were not carnally minded. In the main, their lives were in accordance with the precept of the Gospel.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." -- I Thess. 5:23.

This language implies that they were sanctified in part. Paul says that he remembered, without ceasing, their "work of faith and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." He says they were worthy of imitation by believers in the regions around,

"So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." -- I Thess. 1:7.

Therefore they were not deluded, self-deceived, unconverted men and women who had crept into the church for the sake of popularity. Nor were they backslidden from God. Yet they needed to have God do a farther work for them -- to sanctify them wholly.

"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." -- Heb. 6:1.

These persons were living in the principles of the doctrine of Christ. They were justified believers. Paul exhorts them to go on to a perfection of holiness.

Do not these plain passages abundantly sustain all we have said as to the nature of holiness?

II. -- ITS NECESSITY

1. It is indispensably necessary to qualify us for heaven. We cannot get there without it. None ever did, and none ever will.

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

"To see God," is to be in His presence, to enjoy the bliss He alone can impart. So that, unless he "Follows peace with all men and holiness," no one, no matter what his church or his creed, can stand before the throne of God.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." -- Rev. 7:14.

But "white robes" are the emblem of purity (Rev. 19:8).

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." -- Ps. 24:3, 4.

God's holy place is heaven. But only those who are pure in heart, and clean in life shall dwell there.

2. Holiness is indispensable to present happiness. The unholy person cannot be happy. He may enjoy

pleasure; but pleasure is not happiness. People seek after pleasure because they are unhappy. The pleasures of the world are short-lived and unsatisfactory. But he who is holy has a never-failing spring of enjoyment within.

"In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." -- I Peter 1:8.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." -- Ps. 118:15.

3. Holiness is essential to usefulness. Unholy men may spread Christianity, but they pervert it as they spread it. Their "riches are corrupted," and they corrupt Christianity when employed for its support. Perhaps no man ever devoted so much wealth for the spread of the Gospel as Constantine; and no one ever did so much to corrupt it. An impure channel will foul the purest water. Colored glass imparts its own hue to the light that passes through it. A holy soul alone is qualified to lead others into holiness.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." -- Ps. 51:10-13.

One may, without a clean heart, or the joy of salvation, convert people to the church, but it is to be feared that few of them will be found to be converted to the Lord.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." -- Acts 2:4,41.

Holiness is power. He that possesses it can do good.

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." -- I Cor. 4:20.

III. -- ITS ATTAINABLENESS

1. God commands it.

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God." -- Lev. 20:7.

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." -- I Pet. 1:15.

God never commands that which is impossible. To affirm that he does is blasphemous. It would make him out a tyrant.

2. To sanctify the soul or make it holy, is God's work. If this can be proved, then it follows that holiness is possible. With Him things are easy that are impossible for men.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. And I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, an cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Ezek. 36:25-27.

Here God says He will do the work, and do it thoroughly.

1. He will cleanse -- not from some, -- but from ALL idols, and from ALL filthiness.
2. He will give a new heart and a new spirit.
3. He will cause us to walk in His statutes and judgments. He will impart the spirit of obedience, and with it the power to obey.

"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." -- John 17:17.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. "
-- I Thess. 5:23.

These passages plainly imply that it is God's work to make believers holy.

3. Some have attained to holiness.

"Enoch walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years."

-- Gen. 5:21, 22.

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." -- Gen. 6:9.

"Job was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." -- Job 1:1.

In the New Testament, the disciples of Jesus are called Christians but three times, never Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians. Over sixty times they are called Saints, or the holy ones.

IV. -- HOW IT MAY BE ATTAINED

If it is by the power of God that we are sanctified, then why are not all, and especially all professing Christians, holy? Because they do not meet the conditions. These are:

1. Giving one's self fully to God. All of time, talent, property, reputation influence, yea life itself, must be handed over to God to be His for ever.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." -- Rom. 12:1.

The body includes all. A living sacrifice is a constant, perpetual one.

"For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy: for I am holy." -- Lev. 11:44.

That is, set yourselves apart for God's service, and he will make you holy.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall save it." -- Matt. 16:25.

2. Confession of all sin actual or inbred.

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

If we confess our actual sins he is faithful and just to forgive us. If we confess our inbred sins he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Faith in Christ as our sanctifier.

"God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." -- Acts 15:9.

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." -- Acts 26:18.

But beware that your so-called faith is not presumption. Otherwise you may become a self-conceited Pharisee, instead of a humble, meek, holy follower of Jesus.

"How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only." -- John 5:44.

In both these passages faith is spoken of as the medium through which sanctification is received.

Reader, what do you think of these passages of Scripture that we have brought before you? Do they not show you the necessity and the attainability of holiness? Do you live in this state of grace? If so, thank God, and press forward. If not, make no delay to obtain it. You have too much at stake to live without it a single day. Resolve that you will be holy. Ask God to search you. If, in the light of the Spirit, you see, as is often the case, that you are not justified, have the courage and honesty to confess your condition. If in a backslidden state you seek for holiness, you will, in all probability, take up with something short of reality.

Be thorough! Confess as fully as the word and the Spirit of God direct. Give yourself up without the least reserve to obey the Lord in everything. Look to Jesus as your present Saviour from all sin. Plead His promises. Rely upon His grace to save you to the uttermost. Thus you shall soon feel the sanctifying power the Spirit of God all through soul and body. You will then, in your daily life, have your fruit unto holiness; and the witness of the Spirit will be given, to assure you of your present gracious state, and to give you a pledge of untold glories to be enjoyed in the world to come.

*"Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world,
but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know
the things that are freely given to us of God." -- I
Cor. 2:12*

CHAPTER 2

HOLINESS NOT UNDERSTOOD

The Bible has much to say about holiness. It is an attribute of God. (Ps. 60:6 ; Rev. 4:8, et al). We are commanded to follow it. (Heb. 12:14). To worship God in the beauty of holiness. (Ps. 29:2). Without it no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14). It is the one thing needful. There are many things which are convenient and useful; but this alone is indispensable to our welfare both in this world and in the world to come.

It is important, then, that we have correct ideas of its nature. If we would hit a mark we must know where to aim. If we would attain an excellence we must know what it is. He who would search for diamonds, must know diamonds when he finds them.

Upon first view, it may seem that men are pretty well agreed as to what constitutes holiness. But, on reflection this will be seen to be a mistake. Upon this point there is a wide diversity of opinion. Such is the imperfection of language and such the constitution of particular minds that the same words often fail to express the same idea to different persons, even when they are equally candid. But take holiness in its most tangible form -- take it as exemplified in the lives of holy persons, and it is not generally acknowledged to be holiness. It is usually called by almost any other name than holiness. In God's sight, Job was a holy person. He says,

"Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" -- Job 1:8.

But even his friends labored to convince him that he was a wicked man. Eliphaz says to him,

"They that plough iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same." -- Job 4:8.

Bildad takes up the accusation and reminds him that

"The hypocrite's hope shall perish." -- Job 8:13

Zophar asks him,

"Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" -- Job 11:3

And even Elihu exclaims,

"What man is like Job, who drinks up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men." -- Job 34:7-8.

This was the opinion which his friends had of him, as expressed to his face. Of course the judgment of his enemies was much more unfavorable.

Our Saviour exemplified holiness in its most perfect form. In His life, His conversation His spirit, and in all His actions He was holiness personified. He gave the most unmistakable proofs of disinterested love to all mankind. Yet the popular verdict concerning Him was,

"Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." -- Matt. 11:19.

Christ told his disciples that they must not expect to be appreciated any better than He was.

"If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" -- Matt. 10:25

From that day down to the present, holiness in the disciples of Christ has been recognized by but few, even of those who call themselves Christians. John Wesley stated clearly, defended ably, and exemplified in his life the doctrine of holiness. Whitefield for burning zeal, and simple devotion to the cause of Christ, has not had a superior since the days of St. Paul; yet the Rev. Sidney Smith, a clergyman of the same church as that to which Wesley and Whitefield belonged, and a writer of great celebrity, but expressed the estimate in which they were held by their fellow clergymen, when he said: "They were men of considerable talent; they observed the common decorums of life; they did not run naked into the streets or pretend to the prophetic character; and therefore they were not committed to Newgate. They preached with great energy to weak people, who first stared, then listened -- then believed -- then felt the inward feeling of grace, and became as foolish as their teachers could possibly wish them to be; -- in short, folly ran its ancient course; -- and human nature evinced itself to be what it always has been, under similar circumstances. The great and permanent cause, therefore, of Methodism, is the cause which has given birth to fanaticism in all ages -- the facility of mingling human errors with the fundamental truths of religion."

In our day we see that which we deem essential to holiness purposely omitted in instructions upon this subject. Popular sins are, to say the least, silently tolerated. During the war of the rebellion, [Civil War] in a popular meeting for the promotion of holiness, in the city of New York, Rev. D. F. Newton thanked the Lord for President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. He was at once called to order for introducing a topic calculated to disturb the harmony of the meeting. There are many works on the subject of holiness, written in the days of slave-holding to circulate among slave-holders, and not a word to be found in them condemning the practice. The same spirit which led to silence respecting the sin of slave-holding in the days when all the popular churches welcomed slave-holders to their communion, today utterly ignores the existence of sins which God's word plainly condemns; but which the leading churches openly tolerate. That which encourages what God forbids is not holiness. The name of a thing does not give it its nature.

There is a powerful secret society, spreading itself throughout the country, composed largely of unbelievers, to which, however, many ministers and church-members belong. This society is thoroughly anti-Christian in its character. To pray in the lodge in the name of Christ is declared by the highest Masonic authority, to be a violation of the fundamental principles of Masonry. The members bind themselves by the most horrid oaths to submit to be murdered, and to conceal, and even commit murder under certain circumstances. Of these facts any intelligent person can easily satisfy himself beyond the shadow of a doubt. Yet in many meetings held for the promotion of holiness, to point out these hindrances to the work of holiness would be considered impertinent and fanatical.

Again the persecution to which the saints of God have always been subjected shows that holiness is not recognized when seen. The word declares,

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." -- II Tim. 3:12

This persecution varies in its form with the prevailing spirit of the age. But whatever shape it assumes, persecution never assigns as its reason, the godliness of its victims. Their obstinacy, or contumacy, or disloyalty, or heresy is assigned as the cause of their sufferings. Christ was put to death as an impostor. Luther was excommunicated as a heretic, and Wesley and Whitefield were hunted as fanatics. Their persecutors were the professed children of God, and they believed it to be a zeal for holiness which instigated their opposition to those who furnished bright examples of holiness in their lives.

On the other hand, there are those who make holiness comprise attributes which are entirely beyond the reach of a human being in our present condition. They give a meaning to the term which the Scriptures do not warrant. According to their standard, a holy person cannot make a mistake in judgment, either through ignorance or misapprehension. He must not only do right as he understands it, but do right as they understand it, under all circumstances. They measure others by their own infallibility. They make no allowance for lack of judgment or for imperfect training. He who professes holiness, must be according to their views, beyond the reach of unfriendly criticism. In addition to all this, he must never fall. Should he ever afterward manifest any disposition contrary to his profession, it is then assumed that all along he was either deceived or hypocritical. If he lost holiness, the conclusion is not only that he never had holiness, but that no one ever did or ever will! In short

holiness is pronounced unattainable because some who appeared once to have attained it did not persevere to the end.

Thus a false standard of holiness is raised, and then holiness is declared to be an impossibility, because no one is found to come up to this imaginary standard. We are told to aim our arrow at the sun, and then are ridiculed because we fall short of the mark. The moral perfections of God are presented as our standard, and then we are gravely told that we cannot attain it