

HOLINESS IS IT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

The subject before us is supremely and vitally important. The reader is earnestly urged to give it his most earnest and serious attention if he values his eternal salvation.

II Tim. 4:2 commands us to "Preach the Word; be instant (urgent) in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." The servant of the Lord is required to "keep back nothing that will be profitable" to his hearers if he would be a faithful servant. He is to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Sometimes this requires dealing with matters not altogether palatable, as Ezek. 2:5 says of his hearers "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." No one of us likes to be "reproved" or "corrected" but something this is necessary for our spiritual good, just as a doctor is at times obliged to give bitter medicine so his patient will regain his health. I trust the Spirit of God will bless this message to each reader's heart by making him sensible of how far he has fallen short of "the glory of God," and how sinfully he has failed to measure up to the high standard of the Word of God; also in bringing any unsaved reader under such deep conviction of sin that he will cry out in soul travail "What must I do to be saved?" for Hell is deep and everlasting Turn, poor sinner, turn and flee now, for tomorrow may be forever too late.

As already stated, this subject is of the utmost importance and demands the closest attention of all professing Christians. Whoever we are we ought to be holy. But are we? Let me ask, How do matters stand between your soul and God? I beg of you not to dismiss this question lightly as of little consequence for your eternal weal or woe is involved. Multitudes of professing Christians are living in careless disregard of the way the Lord would have them live. And why so? Because the way the Lord would have them live is displeasing to the flesh, our old sinful nature. Let all hear and take heed to the Divine edict, "if we live after the flesh we shall die" (Rom. 8:13), that is, die the death eternal.

Many seem not to be aware that holiness is necessary to salvation. It is just as necessary as believing, as having faith. This is made crystal clear in the Holy Scriptures.

WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION OR HOLINESS?

It is very important that we know what sanctification or holiness really is. Arthur W. Pink defines it as follows: "Evangelical sanctification is holiness of heart that causes us to love God supremely, so as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, for life or for death; and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Evangelical holiness consists not only of external works of piety and charity, but of pure thoughts, impulses and affections of soul, and an absence of sinful lusts."

Alexander Cruden says: "True holiness consists of a conformity to the nature and will of God, whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts, nor governed by their maxims and customs."

If and when we have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, there has been infused in us a longing and panting to be like Christ in all our ways. We will hate and shun every known sin, and strive to keep every known commandment of God. We will say with David, "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:128). With Paul, we will delight to obey the law of God "after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). We will want and endeavor to have the mind of Christ, and to be conformed to His image. We will be quick to think the best of, to bear with and forgive others as Christ has forgiven us. We will constantly strive to be humble and lowly, denying ourselves so as to be of help to others, meek and patient under trials, keeping ourselves separate from worldly people, religious or otherwise. We will, "come out from among them and be separate" as the Lord commands us. We will be meek, temperate and self-denying. We will be constrained by the love of Christ to abstain from all lying, evil speaking, gossiping, dishonesty, swearing, unfair dealing with our neighbors. We will endeavor to make our religion attractive to others by our outward manner of life. In other words, we will see to it that we are in reality what we profess to be; we will not consciously play the hypocrite. We will aim at all times and in all things to "do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). In the light of this let us ask, Are you holy? Are you?

THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS

This necessity arises from the fact that we have all been born in sin and "shapen in iniquity" (Psa. 51:5) and hence have hearts that hate holiness. The Lord Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, the Pharisees, that "men love darkness (sin) rather than light" (Christ).

In Heb. 12:24 we read: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Since it is quite possible that the reader does harbor the hope and expectation of seeing the Lord some day, this text utters a solemn warning: it brings before us a matter of the greatest importance: it reveals how vitally important it is that we "be holy" since the absence of holiness will bar us forever from the presence of the Lord. This being so, we would be well advised to give this subject our immediate and serious consideration lest we should be without it, or think that we are holy when we are not. The very possibility of being mistaken as to our spiritual state should make us "fear and tremble," and cause us to give ourselves no rest till we have sure proof from Scripture that we have this holiness. This Divine fiat (that we be holy) concerns not only some but every one whoever he is or whatever he is. ALL must be "holy" or, we are warned, we will never "see the Lord."

These same thoughts are emphasized again in Matt. 5:8 where the Lord Jesus tells us that only "the pure in heart shall see God." From these scriptures we see that God will not call into intimate communion with Himself any who are corrupt or unholy, for Amos 3:3 asks "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" And again, "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" Or an unholy sinner with a holy God? Our God is "glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11), and those whom he separates unto Himself must be holy, must be "made partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10), for our God is not a God that "hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Him" (Psa. 5:4). If we would be saved and dwell eternally with God, we must be both reconciled to Him and sanctified in our inner man. This we cannot accomplish of ourselves by the mere profession of Christianity or the doing of a few good works, for these will not give us access to the Holy One. Unless we be "born of the Spirit" and washed in the precious blood of Christ and are holy, we shall never "see God." Unless we are justified, regenerated and sanctified we do not have the life of God in us whatever profession we make, we are not true Christians in the sight of God, and will surely miss heaven at last. Do you say "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" We must remember that we will not be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease. Christ, Himself, tells us we must "strive" if we are to "enter in at the strait gate."

Alas with what mere forms of godliness, mere outward appearances and rituals so many are satisfied. Faithful preaching of the Word seems to have no effect on them. Nothing will bring them to cry out Job of old "Behold, I am vile...I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job. 40:4; 42:6) No, just as long as they keep themselves free from the grosser sins that are punishable among men, their conscience seems dead to all other things, they seem not to be at all troubled by the depravity and defilement of their nature, if indeed they are even aware of their depravity and defilement.

The Spirit of God has revealed to us through Prov. 30:12 that "There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." From this we learn that this "generation" has never been cleansed by the Holy Spirit in spite of the good opinion they have of their own state; they think themselves to be pure whereas they are "filthy." This was true of the Pharisees of Christ's day who were constantly cleansing their hands and cups, engaged in an endless round of ceremonial washings, and all the time ignorant of the fact that "within they were full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:25, 27). It is sad to say that this is true of a multitude of churchgoers today. Perhaps they attend church services regularly, being orthodox in their views as far as they have any; they give regularly and liberally to the church, but of the all important matter of the state of their hearts before a hold God, their conscience seems entirely at ease, they are not at all concerned, for they are not at all concerned, for they are dead in their profession; having a name that they live but "art dead" (Rev. 3:1). They are perfectly satisfied with a worthless, lifeless, fruitless, empty, false profession. All that matters with them is, that they appear moral and upright before their fellowmen, and even some are unconcerned about that. They are totally unaware that God is not pleased with their outward performances unless the spirit of holiness sanctifies them. But we know that with such sacrifices God is not well-pleased unless the heart first be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God's nature and will. To be acceptable to God, all our activities must spring from a

loving and delighting to do the will of God in a cheerful manner without refusing or repining against any duty as though it were a yoke grievous to be borne.

Take heed! Unless we are purged from the pollution of sin as well as cleared from the guilt of it, we will never be fit for communion with God. We read in Rev. 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it (the eternal dwellingplace of God and His people) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." We see then that personal holiness is just as imperative for salvation as is the forgiveness of sin. Are we aware of this?

Walter Marshall, who wrote in 1629 said: "Many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by salvation but to be delivered from hell, and to enjoy heavenly happiness and glory." Again, he said: "God saveth us from our sinful uncleanness here by washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) as well as from hell hereafter. Christ was called 'Jesus' (Saviour) because He saves His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Therefore deliverance from our sins is part of our salvation which is begun in this life by justification and sanctification, and perfected in glorification in the life to come. We conclude then that holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not as the means to the end, but as part of the end itself...without holiness we shall never see God, and are as unfit for His glorious presence as swine for the presence-chamber of an earthly king." He goes on to say, "Great multitudes of ignorant people that live under the Gospel harden their hearts in sin and ruin their souls forever by trusting on Christ for such an imaginary salvation as consisteth not at all in holiness, but only in forgiveness of sin and deliverance from everlasting torments. They would be free from the punishments due to sin, but they love their lusts so well that they hate holiness and desire not to be saved from the service of sin... they do not sincerely desire true salvation if they do not desire to be made holy and righteous in their hearts and lives." So wrote this godly man some 250 years ago. Would that we had many like him today so faithfully preaching the Word. O that we may cry out earnestly unto the Lord to save us not only from "the everlasting burnings and the devouring fire" but from SIN. If we do not so cry, then are we without any real desire for God's salvation. Let us remember that where there is no practical deliverance from the service of sin in our daily lives, we are strangers to God's saving grace. Do we realize this?

We hear much about how to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, but how little is said concerning the need of and how to be cleansed from sin's pollution? There are great numbers who will readily assent to the sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice who, alas, know nothing nor care about heart purity, and yet they profess to be saved! They imagine that if they but have faith, all is sure to be well with them in the end even though they be not holy. Satan, as an angel of light, has deceived them. He is deceiving multitudes of others in this same way. But if we examine the faith they profess and test it by the Word, what do we find it to be worth? Nothing at all as far as entrance into heaven is concerned. Such faith is no better than that of the demons who "believe and tremble" (Jas. 2:19). The faith of God's elect is "after godliness" (Titus 1:1); it is a "most holy faith" (Jude 20); it is a faith which "purifieth the heart" (Acts 15:9); "worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

If we only stopped to consider, we would become aware that holiness is necessarily required by the very nature of God. A holy God must demand a holy people! It cannot be otherwise. Many times in Scripture He is called "the Holy One of Israel," and the angel's cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isa. 6:3). Because God is ineffably holy He demands holiness of us. Lev. 11:44 reads: "For I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy for I am holy." This is a Divine command, not merely good advice which we are free to regard or disregard at our pleasure.

We need to remember that our "God is of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). How then can He look with acceptance on lawless rebels, filthy sinners, workers of iniquity? He cannot and will not, for as Joshua told his people "He is a holy God" (Josh. 24:19). Holiness is the perfection of all God's attributes, and God makes the holiness of His own nature the ground of His demand for holiness in us. But many today have little conception of how holy our God really is! The God of many is certainly not the God of Holy Writ.

We repeat, it is just as necessary for us to be holy in our daily lives as it is that we should be justified. Men are woefully mistaken in concluding that because godliness and obedience do not save, they can reach heaven without them. We must remember that God has not purchased for us security in sin but salvation from sin. Never forget this. Each day that passes brings us nearer the end of life's journey, and we are sadly

mistaken if we imagine we are nearing heaven when we are following the course that leads to hell. The broad and easy way that so many are traveling leads to everlasting destruction. It is only the "strait and narrow way" which leads unto "life," and (our blessed Lord Himself adds words which ought to startle us) "few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). "Few" will be saved because they feel the price of salvation is too great, because the "gate" is too "strait" and "the way" too "narrow" wherein to walk. Will you be one of the "Few" to be saved, or one of the "many" who perish in their sins?

There is no other way to be godly but to grow in holiness. We must be holy, for God demands this of us. If we truly love Him we will desire with all our hearts to please Him, to be holy and obey Him. He is our sovereign Lawgiver, and we are but despising our Divine Lord and Master if we do not comply with His demands. "If a man love Me, (not, he ought to, but) he will keep My words," Christ declares in John 14:23). Our daily lives are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" We are to glorify Him in this scene of His rejection. "Them that honor Me I will honor" He tells us. We do not honor Him by wordy expressions of our lips but by a holy life... a life separated in heart and purpose from the world and worldlings, religious or otherwise. "And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15).

Probably nothing has done more to bring the Gospel of Christ into greater reproach than the indifference, unholy, deceitful and even wicked lives of those professing to bear His name. As the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through the ungodly Jews of Paul's day, so it is today by the unholy lives of many of Christ's professed followers.

We quote Bishop J.C. Ryle, "I look at the world and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness. I look at professing Christians and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name. I turn to the Bible and I hear the Spirit saying 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Surely this text ought to make us consider our ways and search our hearts. Surely it should raise within us solemn thoughts, and send us to prayer."

Perhaps you say, If we were as you say we ought to be, this would make us peculiar. Does not Titus 2:14 tell us that "Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" God's true people always were different from the world around them. II Peter 3:11 reads, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" That which cost us nothing is worth nothing. Dear reader, permit me in all seriousness to press upon your heart that we must have something more than merely a Christian name. To quote Bishop Ryle again, "We must be saints on earth if ever we are to be saints in heaven He leads none to heaven but those whom He sanctifies on earth. Old things must pass away, we must become new creatures."

It is startling to know how far a person may go in the profession of religion and yet have no grace, to be dead in God's sight and lost after all. Judas Iscariot is a good example. When the Lord warned the apostles that one of them would betray Him, no one asked, Is it Judas? They never suspected him. Let us not be satisfied that Christ has wrought a work of grace in our hearts unless we can show clear evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in us.

Bishop Ryle also wrote: "I do not set myself up to be better than other people, and if any one ask 'who are you to write in this way?' I answer, 'I am a very poor creature indeed.' But I say that I cannot read the Bible without desiring to see many believers more spiritual, more holy, more single-eyed, more heavenly-minded, more whole-hearted than they are. I want to see among believers more of a pilgrim spirit, a more decided separation from the world, a conversation more evidently in heaven, a closer walk with God. We certainly need a higher standard of holiness in this day, a holiness that was known to distinguish the saints of old. Our silver has become gross, our salt has lost its savor. We are more than half asleep. O friends, let us arouse for 'the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.' Let us 'lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord' (Heb. 12:1; II Cor. 7:1)."

A.W. Pink writes: "Conditions in the religious world are at such a low ebb today that the claims of God are whittled down, and the high standard of the Word of God so disregarded and so little emphasized, that it is rare indeed to find any professing Christians who are deeply concerned about their spiritual state. Such a low standard now exists that mightily few of the Lord's dear people have any clear and disturbing

conceptions of how far short they come of measuring up to the holy model which God has set before us in His Word. Such feeble and faulty ideals of Christian living now prevail that those who are preserved from the grosser evils which the world condemns are perfectly at ease, and fancy that all is well, and therefore little fear of the Lord is on their souls. Our spiritual senses and perceptions are so deadened and blunted that almost anything is considered as being acceptable unto God." Many seem to think that they are accepted with God, just as long as they are outwardly religious, moral, good citizens and honest.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones in his valuable work on *The Sermon on the Mount* writes: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned about the heart...the heart is the whole matter of His teaching. Why? Because the heart is the center of the personality, affecting the emotions, the fountain from whence everything comes. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' not merely on the surface but in the center of their being and at the source of every activity. 'The pure in heart' are those who mourn about the impurity of their hearts. To be 'pure in heart' means to keep 'the first and great commandment' which is 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' It further means that we should live to 'the glory of God' in every respect, and that this should be the supreme desire of our life... It means that we desire God, that we desire to serve Him, and our Lord states here that only those who do so shall 'see God.' That is why I say that this is one of the most solemnizing statements in all the Holy Scripture, and yet men and women would reduce this to just a little matter of decency, or morality, or an intellectual interest in the doctrines of the Christian faith. But let us remember that if we truly belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are being prepared to enter into the presence of the King of kings; that the day is coming when we are going to see the blessed God face to face, no longer through a glass darkly. Do we realize that we are being prepared for this? And do we set our affections on things unseen and eternal? If we do then our greatest concern, the supreme objective and desire of our lives will be to have a 'pure heart,' to be 'holy.'"

I John 3:3 states that "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Now a "pure heart" does not and cannot signify a heart from which all sin has been removed. It was not so with Job, as we have before mentioned, who said, "Behold, I am vile" (Job 40:4). It was not so with Daniel who acknowledged "my comeliness is turned in me into corruption" (Dan 10:8). Even godly Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven and returned again groaned, "O wretched man that I am," (Rom 7:24). When we are born again at regeneration a new nature or principle of life is communicated to us which contains within itself pure desires, pure intentions. The fear of God is implanted in and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and this results in our souls panting after God, yearning for a full conformity to his holy will, and a sincere and continuous desire and endeavor to please Him in all things. A "pure heart" is one that loathes impurity, one that hates and shuns sin, one that makes conscience of foolish, sinful imaginations and desires, and wrong-doing. It makes one entirely dissatisfied with himself because of pride, unbelief, enmity, evil thoughts, and because sin is so often allowed in his life, and not speedily and humbly confessed and forsaken.

We will never know the nature of sin experimentally until we understand what holiness is. A.W. Pink writes, "Holiness in the Christian is chiefly a moral quality which produces conformity to the Divine will or law, and moves its possessor to aim at the glory of God in all things. This, and nothing short of this, could meet the Divine requirements: and this is the greatest gift which God bestows upon His people."

I John 3:4 states, "sin is the transgression of the law," which is nothing less than a trampling upon God's holy commandments, an act of defiance against the almighty Lawgiver. To quote A.W. Pink again, "Sin, then, is an inward state of heart which refuses to be in subjection to God. It is a casting off of the Divine law, a setting up a self-will and self-pleasing in its stead. Since we know holiness is the opposite of sin, this helps us to determine something more of the nature of sanctification. Sanctification is that work of Divine grace in the believer which brings him back into the allegiance to God, regulating his affections and actions in harmony with His will, writing the law on the heart, moving him to make God's glory his chief end and aim. That Divine work is commenced at regeneration and completed only at glorification only after the principle of holiness has been imparted to us can we discern the real character of sin."

Whatever days or years are left us in this earthly scene may they be holy ones, then they will be happy ones. Whether we live, may we live unto the Lord. Let us firmly resolve from this very moment to make it the business of our lives to live as becometh saints; to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the

new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col. 3:9, 10). O that we may be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless at the coming of the Lord. "Suffer this word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22).

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