

# The King's Highway

## An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 40:5-8

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### SANCTIFICATION AND FORNICATION

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Text: I Thessalonians 4:3

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."

We note in the first verse of the chapter that the apostle is giving what Adam Clarke calls "instruction" to the church at Thessalonica. This, as all Paul's epistles, is written to believers and not to the world. I mention this as some have tried to make this Scripture refer to sinners. A new sect has risen among the holiness people that boasts of "holiness de-luxe." To accomplish this there must be a super view of holiness doctrine—something different. They say it is wrong to take this text and divide it as all the holiness preachers do. They declare that the reason the preachers do not use the whole text is that the latter half proves that this does not belong to Christians at all but is a text for sinners only. The facts are that the text has no application to sinners. Here are the exact words of the leader of this new movement. "Some who quote these words know that they are omitting the words that complete the verse. They know that a comma follows the word sanctification and not a period. They know that the words, 'That ye may abstain from fornication' follow the word 'sanctification' and complete the verse. They know that the experience of regeneration is sufficient to save from fornication. And knowing all this, they know they are handling the Word of God deceitfully. They may know by reading that John Wesley recognized that the term 'sanctified' is continually applied by St. Paul to all who are justified."

All well informed people know that there is an initial sanctification that is accomplished in the act of regeneration.

Now I am as certain as I live that Paul was not thinking of the gracious work of regeneration but of entire sanctification when he wrote these words of my text. He had in mind the same word that he uses in the fifth chapter and the twenty-third verse. Both words come from the same Greek root and imply the complete cleansing of the soul. I am told this by the best Greek students. Paul tells this converted church that there is a definite second work of grace in store for them and that it is the will of God that they have it. If there is an initial sanctification that we receive in the hour of our conversion why was it necessary for Paul to tell converted people about it? Had they not experienced it and did they not have it? Why tell me I have something that I already possess?

Does not this bit of ignorant reasoning on the part of those who declare that this text does not refer to believers charge the Holy Ghost with folly? Would the Spirit of God inspire Paul to write this needless information. Why inform a converted man that it is the will of God that he repent? Did he not know that long ago and thus repent? We must not forget that Paul is giving

instruction to the people of God. Adam Clarke comments on verse one as follows—"We give you proper instructions in heavenly things, and request you to attend to our advice. The apostle used the most used and the most impressing; for he had a strong and affectionate desire that this CHURCH should excel in all true righteousness and holiness." In his comment on verse two he says—"Ye know what commandments we gave you", this refers to his instructions while he was among them; and instructions on particular subjects, which he does not recapitulate but only hints at." So you see that Clarke believed that Paul was giving this church some splendid information and instructions. It would be a poor exegete indeed, that would turn at this juncture and address a verse to the outsiders. Have we any Scripture to prove that God calls sinners to the initial act of sanctification? Did John tell his wilderness audience that it was the will of God that they be sanctified? Did he not cry continually—"Repent?" What was the answer of Paul to the Philippian jailer? Did he not say—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved?" I challenge any one to give a single instance where sanctification was offered to sinners. Sinners are called to repentance first. Whatever sanctification they received at the time of conversion they receive as a result of repentance.

But, let us take our places again at the feet of the great commentator and hear his comment on verse three. "This is the will of God even your sanctification." He says—"God has called you to holiness; He requires that you should be holy; for without holiness none shall see the Lord. This is the general calling, but in it many particulars are included. Some of these he proceeds to mention; and it is very likely that these have been points on which he gave them particular instructions." So you see that Dr. Clarke believes that Paul is still talking to the same group—the church. In his comment on the words—"that ye abstain from fornication" he says—"The word 'fornication' as we have seen in other places, includes all sorts of uncleanness; and it was probably this consideration that induced several MMS., some versions and fathers, to add here "all."

"PERFECTING HOLINESS in the fear of the Lord." Listen to Clarke again as he comments on this verse—"By 'filthiness of the flesh' the apostle undoubtedly means drunkenness, fornication, adultery—all such sins as are done immediately against the body, and filthiness of spirit—all impure desires, unholy thoughts and impure imaginations. If we avoid and abhor evil imaginations and turn away our eyes from beholding vanity incentives to evil being thus lessened (for the eye affects the heart), there will be the less danger of our falling into outward sin. If we avoid all outward occasions of sinning, evil propensities will certainly be lessened. All this is our work under the common aids of the grace of God.

Let us note God's method of dealing with the carnal mind and fornication in particular. Open

your Bibles to Colossians 3:5. We read, "Mortify therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Let us have the comment of Dr. Clarke. He says, as he speaks of the phrase—"mortify your members." "Put them to death: the verb is used metaphorically, signifying to deprive a thing of its power, to destroy its strength. Use no member of your body to sin against God: keep all under dominion; and never permit the **beast to run away with the man.** To gratify any sensual appetite is to give it the very food and nourishment by which it lives, thrives and is active. However the body may suffer by excessive sensual indulgences, the appetite increases with the indulgence. Deny yourself and let reason rule; and the animal will not get the ascendancy over the rational man." This is the job of all who are sanctified as well as those yet un-sanctified. Perhaps Jesus had this in mind when He said—"If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

The Christian must abstain from these things of the flesh. They must be put to death. This will never be done without cooperation on our part. I believe that was what Paul had in mind as he used the word "abstain" in the text. We must see but not look. It is the lingering gaze that does the mischief. Satan has marshalled all his hosts in order to destroy the Christian. He has captured womanhood. He has not only taken over the press and the billboards but he has captured the living model. On every side women are seen in semi-nudity to tempt and inflame the minds of men. The moving-picture show is the lowest form used to wreck and ruin our young people. The lewd woman can be seen in the beer gardens sitting at the table alongside her offspring, if she has any, drinking from the cup that inebriates. It looks as if the forces of evil are making their last great effort to thwart the work of God and utterly ruin the human race.

And so we see that the word "fornication" has a wider application than the physical act. This definition, I believe, does cover the physical act but it goes far beyond that. To backslide and go back to the beggarly elements of the world is to commit lewd fornication. Hear James—"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship with the world is enmity with God?"

I cannot leave this subject unfinished. I must speak of literal fornication. If regeneration completely saves us from all danger along this line why does Paul tell the church at Corinth—"Nevertheless, to AVOID fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband?" If there is no danger then why this admonition? And, again, in Acts 15:20 we read in the letter sent by the college of apostles to the CHURCHES, these words—"That they abstain from fornication." If regeneration takes care of this matter as fully as this new sect says then why this inclusion? You note that the

(Continued on Page 5)