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HOLINESS

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"But now." (Romans 6:22)

Whatever the past may hold, whatever of ignorance or defeat or prejudice or lack of experience may lie in our yesterdays, the apostle is striking a present tense level in the realm of holy victory. "But now, being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Among the reasons why I preach holiness often and with as great thoroughness as I am capable of doing is, first, this commodity is the final essential to abiding and eternal success for every immortal being in the world. If we fail in everything else, we may die paupers and be buried in the potter's field if that extreme failure in temporal things were to be ours; and yet if we die in possession of this moral quality which brings us into correspondence with, and into harmony with an infinite and sovereign God, we have made an eternal success of our living. On the other hand, we may succeed until we enjoy the applause of men and the luxuries that are made possible by material prosperity in the things of time; we may win large possessions, we may win recognition and place and fame, we may win what men will applaud as success in our undertakings in time; but if any of us fail at this particular point, our failure will be eternal. It will be doom. The commodity my text speaks of is a moral commodity, which is provided to fit morally responsible beings for harmony with their Creator, and which is planned and provided to prepare man to finally fill up the measure of the purpose of God in His creation. God built man for high and holy purposes, and Christian holiness is an absolute essential to fulfill and measure up to the standard of that great purpose.

Secondly, it is the great moral and spiritual objective of the whole redemptive undertaking of a sovereign God. God put all that He had into redemption. The Scriptures describe Him as emptying Himself, of giving all to save men from sin. He did this for a supreme moral objective. God is not a profligate. He could never have given all that He gave, and emptied Himself of His glory, for a consideration of lesser value than the complete recovery of moral beings who had been hurt by sin; but when God held in His own thought the great objective of a full recovery of man back to the place where he could fill up the measure of His purpose in his origin, and reach a level of eternal association, co-operation, and fellowship with Himself, He hesitated not to give all that He had for such a result as that. Hallelujah to His name!

I have a third reason for preaching holiness a great deal, and that is that so few in this busy and sinful world are aware of the importance of this truth and experience, and therefore so few in the total setup of things

really preach it. I mean so few preach it until people get it. That affords me a reason for preaching it a great deal more than possibly I would if every minister of God gave it the place in his ministry that belongs to it.

With these reasons for the why of my preaching holiness so much, I shall proceed with this theme. This text reveals to us two of the most important phases of this great truth. First, "But now." If you have had defeats or failures in the past, if you have not yet walked in the light or come into possession of this grace, may we not fasten on the first two words of this text and say, "But now?" From now on, let the past go under the blood, down in God's forgetfulness, cancelled by Calvary's merit and power, and let the "but now" be the beginning of a victory that shall have no end; for if you come into this gracious grace, you will find there is only one end to it—the beginning end. If you ever get in, you can never get out unless you back out, because you cannot go ahead and get out of it; it is eternal in its reality. You go ahead and you will go higher in the riches and glory of the reality of this wonderful grace which is eternal.

"But now being made free from sin." That is the heart of holiness, negatively speaking, "Being made free from sin." Sin is the only thing in the world with which God has controversy. God has unfaltering, uncompromising, and eternal controversy with sin, not only with sinning as an act, but with sin in man's heart. God opposes that. God sympathizes with our being human, with our limitations, our human infirmities and frailties. To be human and mortal as we are means to have limitations and frailties and some handicaps in our total living, but God's attitude toward us in that realm is, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." God isn't angry with us because we are human. He sympathizes with us; He gets up next to our human frailties and feels for us; gives us His help, not condemnation. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." If He can get us to be free from sin, He will be right on hand with us in every other phrase of our total living. He is a great tender, compassionate Father to His children that are freed from sin.

The only treatment God has ever provided for sin is to forgive its guilt, lift its condemnation, end its death, impart life, and purge its pollution until we are clean, and fill us with righteousness which is by faith in Himself. That is God's treatment for sin. He has no mercy on sin; He has mercy on the sinner, His treatment is to utterly destroy it. The record in the Old Testament that modernists criticize and scorn is, namely, God's ordering a war of extermination. To Saul He said, "Go and utterly destroy the Amalekites." They were past redemption. They represented sin in the human race and human heart. God

said, "Don't leave a trace of them." That means the eradication of sin. That is what holiness means, the eradication of sin.

I received a catalog of a Bible college recently, and in their statement of doctrine, among the different things they listed, they referred to sanctification, and in parenthesis said (but not eradication). My text says, "Being made free from sin." That is God's purpose. Would it not be a great calamity for an infinite God to undertake to save us from sin and then actually allow that we would have to keep some of it on hand, and not be free from it! If sin is a commodity contrary to God, what would we want any of it for? I would not be capable of giving reverence to a God who would leave sin in us. The most logical and Scriptural and reasonable proposition in the world is that God, in dealing with sin, should utterly destroy it, free us from it, eradicate it. We have already declared how that does not mean our humanity, but the sin element in our humanity. "Being then made free from sin." Isn't it good that we can be freed from the last thing in us that hurts God, so He can look right down through us and not see anything that He disapproves?

Mr. Halderman, a Calvinist, who does not believe in the possibility of our being made holy in this life, has nevertheless been granted a great illumination of the Spirit in defining it. Halderman says, "Holiness is not goodness, or kindness, or even morality. Holiness, as the Bible presents it to us, represents the correspondence of the soul with the intent and purpose of God's own nature, so that if God were to move into the human soul, He would feel as much at home as upon His throne in glory." That is exactly what the Scriptures teach. It has been witnessed to by many that He abides. He makes His home in the temple, the inner sanctuary of our hearts, and there is a moral correspondence with His own nature and will.

"Being then made free from sin, and become servants unto God." The second proposition in the nature of holiness is complete devotement to God. The term servant here may be best illustrated by the love slave back in Israel's day. Slavery was regulated among God's own people in ancient Israel. You could buy a man or maid servant, and the price paid for them would be determined by the length of time to the year of release. For every seven years they were to go free. If, when the year of release came, the servant should say, "Oh, I am so happy here, I love you so, I want to stay with you forever," the master was to back him up against a door post and put a hole in the servant's ear, that represented the seal of his choice, and he became his master's forever. When you are made free from sin, you become love slaves to God; complete devotement to God. Being made holy does not give us a faultless perfection, but it does give us a fixed, unswerving loyalty to God. It puts

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