

The Quest for Holiness

By Sr.-Major Allister Smith

How is the blessing of holiness obtained? While there are certain essential conditions which must be fulfilled, we must continually remember that the Holy Spirit deals with us as individuals. Therefore our experience of seeking and finding the blessing will not be quite the same in detail as that of others. Some enter into the blessing soon after conversion (where proper teaching has been given), but others spend years in the wilderness of doubt and uncertainty before by faith they enter into the Promised Land.

John Wesley urged his preachers to lead their converts to seek after holiness as soon as they were saved. He said, "This is the very time preferable to all others. They have then the simplicity of children; they are fervent in spirit, ready to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye. If we once suffer this fervor to subside, we shall find it hard enough to bring them again even to this point." He speaks of one convert who was sanctified twelve hours after her conversion, and others within two or three days. This may be exceptional, but it is possible, especially where people have had a lot of teaching about holiness even before their conversion.

A Baptism of Power

The American Revivalist, Finney, was saved while praying in a wood. The same evening, in his own home, he received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit, cleansing and filling him with love and power. A business man in England was saved in my meeting one Sunday night, and the following Tuesday he was wonderfully filled with the Spirit and sanctified. Today he is on fire for God, preaching the gospel and winning souls. Our Lord's disciples were recommissioned on Easter Sunday night (John 20:22), and were filled with the Spirit fifty days later (Acts 2:4). The Samaritans converted under the preaching of Philip were filled with the Holy Spirit a few days later (Acts 8:15-17).

It is a mistake to wait years before one seeks the blessing of holiness, thinking it can only be the experience of a mature Christian. This is why so few today have a definite experience of sanctification. Instead of passing quickly from salvation to sanctification, they are like the children of Israel, who wandered forty years in the wilderness. Within a year of leaving Egypt, they had crossed the wilderness and had reached Kadesh-Barnea on the borders of Canaan. But listening to the majority report of the ten unbelieving spies, the people refused to enter and turned back into the wilderness, where most of them perished.

At Kadesh-Barnea

Many Christians come to their Kadesh-Barnea soon after their conversion, but they listen to the majority around them who either say that holiness is impossible in this life, or only to be obtained after many years of the Christian pilgrimage. Instead of listening to the small majority of truly sanctified Christians who (like Caleb and Joshua of old) urged them to enter the Promised Land, they turned back to the wilderness of doubt, fear and self-effort, where many of them backslide and ultimately perish.

Most backsliding may be due to the fact that Christians do not obey the call to go forward into the Canaan of full salvation. Disobedience

to the light inevitably brings darkness; and the more light we have from God, the deeper is our spiritual darkness if we disobey it. This is what our Lord meant when He said: "If the light that is within you be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. 6:23). And again: "Take heed therefore that the light that is in thee turn not to darkness" (Luke 11:35). He also said: "While ye have light, believe in the light (obey the light), that ye may be the children of light" (John 12:36).

The Empty House

Jesus warns us that when the unclean spirit is cast out of a man (at conversion), that evil spirit will later return to his heart, bringing seven other evil spirits, if the heart is left empty. Then the last state of that man shall be worse than the first. How difficult it then will be to cast out the seven devils! All soul-winners know how hardened backsliders can become. They will sit unmoved in the most powerful meetings; and of some it can be said that, like Judas, they have become so hardened as to be beyond repentance. They have had their last chance. They have said "No" to God for the last time.

Many Christians have a wonderful conversion. They are full of joy, are eager to witness, and love to read the Bible and to engage in prayer. But because they are not taught about holiness or because they reject or neglect such teaching, they gradually lose their first love, like the Ephesian Christians (Rev. 2:4). They become cold and begin secretly to backslide in their hearts. Like Samson, they are unaware that they are losing the Spirit. Like the Laodicean church, they are unaware of their danger.

Because David was not sanctified, he stayed away from the battlefield. Instead of fighting the Lord's battles, he took things easy at home. He began secretly to back slide until he fell into open sin. In Psalm 51 we have his prayer for forgiveness and for holiness. He admits he has lost the joy of his salvation. Are there not many today who have lost the joy they had when they were first saved? They are no longer eager to testify and, when they do, the testimony lacks power. They also lose interest in Bible study, and no longer attend the prayer meeting. The Devil gives them plenty of excuses, and they usually find someone to blame for their failings.

Eradicate the Weeds

Some think they must gradually grow into holiness, but it is difficult to grow when the heart is unclean. How can the plants grow when the garden is full of weeds? Once the heart has been cleansed and sanctified, there will be healthy and rapid growth. A sanctified young person may grow more in six months than an unsanctified adult will grow in sixty years. Others wait to understand the doctrine before they claim the experience. But we cannot fully understand holiness until we are cleansed from unbelief and filled with the spirit of wisdom. Once we are sanctified, the Spirit of Truth will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

It is possible to be sanctified without knowing a great deal about the Bible or about doctrine. In Africa many native converts have been sanctified before they could read or write. Was it not so in the New Testament days? The Samaritan converts knew little about doctrine when they were filled with the Spirit.

Cornelius and his household were filled with the Spirit three days after he met Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 9:17). Paul learned the doctrine of holiness after he was sanctified (probably in the Arabian desert), as did Peter and the other apostles. It is possible to have a lot of doctrine in the head, and yet to have an unsanctified heart. We are not sanctified by knowledge and some doctrine; but we need not wait to understand everything about holiness before we seek the blessing. In fact, those who have a lot of doctrine from their childhood often find it more difficult to exercise faith for salvation or sanctification.

Simple Heart-faith

Some pass quickly from salvation to sanctification because they are humble of heart and are possessed of a simple faith and a teachable spirit. After conversion, we need to become as little children, and thus we will more quickly enter into the Canaan of holiness. Those who are possessed of a proud spirit, or a strong and stubborn will, or a highly-developed intellect, usually take a long time to become sanctified. They find it difficult to humble themselves, to yield the will to God, and to exercise simple heart faith. Yet this type (John Wesley was one of them) will often be mightily used for God once they are sanctified. Their strong wills and mighty intellect then come under the control of the Holy Spirit, and they become gifted and mighty exponents of the life of holiness.

Do not despair, however, if you find your search after holiness long and difficult. God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). We must take on us the yoke of Bible study and prayer, and in due time Jesus will bring us into the deep rest of sanctification (Matt. 11:29). In Hebrews 4 we read that "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." They have the rest of salvation, but need the deeper rest of sanctification, the rest from self. "Let us labour (in prayer and Bible study) to enter into that rest."—The War Cry

APPROPRIATING FAITH

To aim aright at the liberty of the children of God requires a continual acting of faith—of a naked faith in a naked promise or declaration such as:

"The Son of God was manifested, (to) destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

"The law of the Spirit of life in Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13).

By a naked faith in a naked promise I do not mean a bare assent that God is faithful, and that such a promise in the Book of God may be fulfilled in me, but rather a bold, hearty, steady, venturing of my soul, body and spirit upon the truth of the promise with an appropriating act!—Fletcher.

TESTIMONY

Testimony is not speech making, nor argument in favor of Jesus, nor defense of His character, nor reference to Him as an historical Person, nor reading a little squib from a newspaper, nor quoting a verse of Scripture or hymn—but telling what you know. Hence, if you know that Jesus saves you now, you can tell it. Persons talk glibly about what they are full of; if you are full of salvation you will readily talk of it.

The King's Highway

The Interior Life of the Sanctified

By Eldon R. Martin
in "Wesleyan Methodist"

Regeneration has such radical effects on the outer life that it is easily observed by all. Through this experience, one is made a new creature in Christ. His burden of sin is lifted, and he has new desires, new associates, new habits, and a new outlook on life. While the experience of entire sanctification has its visible outward manifestations, the most glorious results are in the interior life, and are better known to the one who has experienced this grace than to any observer. The crisis experienced is not the end, but is the means of bringing the soul into this marvelous spiritual victory in the inner life. The inner life of the sanctified is the realm of a most remarkable transformation. Three-fourths of an iceberg is beneath the surface; likewise, it is in the hidden springs of the soul that holiness is most refreshing and amazing.

Holiness is the normal state of the soul. It is spiritual wholeness and spiritual health. Sin is abnormal and foreign to man's spiritual nature. Carnality is an intruder into the garden of God in the heart of the believer, and diseases the vines, blights the fruit, and destroys the practical value of God's inheritance. Let us notice the realms of interior life which entire sanctification brings back to normalcy.

First, holiness produces emotional balance. Man is an emotional being, and to stifle the springs of holy emotion, is to warp one of the finer sensibilities of man's spiritual nature. Sin does not destroy the emotional life of the individual, but perverts and misdirects it. Emotion can be a gentle breeze to motivate us toward our goal, or a destructive tornado to drive us onto the rocks of disaster. Holy emotion is constructive and creative, and always ennobles and enriches our lives; unholy emotion enervates, dissipates, and enslaves. The interior life of the sanctified becomes a beautiful garden of holy emotions. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, we find listed the fruit of the Spirit, and each phase is of an emotional nature or has an emotional quality: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Somewhere I read that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and each of the other characteristics is a different manifestation of this love. Joy is love in full blossom, peace is love in repose, longsuffering is love under test, gentleness is love in refinement, goodness is love in action, faith is love in confidence, meekness is love in humility, and temperance is love under control. In Romans 14:17 we read, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Righteousness is a state and a relationship, but joy and peace are the emotions which are produced by the state of righteousness. Righteousness, in the true sense, implies complete rightness in our outer and inner relationship to God, which is entire sanctification. This state of purity produces holy emotions and excludes unholy ones.

In contrast, Galatians 5 also lists the work of the flesh, which gives insight to the unholy emotional havoc wrought by sin in the human heart. Some of these "works" are lustful acts, but several are lustful emotions: hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings. When sin entered the Garden of Eden, it

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turned the beautiful, fruitful garden into a wilderness of weeds, briars, and thorns. When sin entered the heart of Adam, it choked out the wonderful fruit of the Spirit, and produced the lusts of the flesh. Since then, every one born into the human family has had a totally depraved heart infested by the seed of every unholy emotion. Entire sanctification cleanses the heart of all these, and causes the fruit of the Spirit to reach full fruition—love, joy, peace, in the Holy Ghost. Praise God for salvation which changes the heart from a wilderness of depraved emotions to a paradise of pure emotions!

Two basic emotions of mankind are fear and anger. Psychologists claim that both are given as emergency emotions for self-preservation. If this is true, sin has perverted and distorted them into instruments of violence which are hanging as a pall over the human race. What does entire sanctification accomplish in this realm? From the teachings of the Bible it is evident that we are delivered from slavish fear and destructive anger. "Perfect love casteth out fear." This, however, does not include constitutional fear which is necessary for our preservation, but the slavish fear which drives us to distraction. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." We may (and should) be afraid to handle a rattlesnake, or to ride 100 miles per hour over winding roads with a maniac. But we are not, or need not be, afraid of the judgment, or of the tomorrows of life, for we are in the will of God where "all things work together for good to them that love God."

One should have a feeling of indignation when he sees wrong triumph over right, he should be stirred when he hears God's name repeatedly taken in vain, he should experience displeasure when he sees the pure and holy trampled in the mire, he should be possessed of a feeling of repulsion when he sees sin walking unashamed through our streets. But, while this is true, the wholly sanctified will not experience personal resentment, nor indulge in rage or fury, nor in outbursts of passion. Even these legitimate emotions must exist against a principle, and not against a person. There will be no malice which rejoices in the hurt of an individual, but only indignation against the sinful principles which are damning souls. Carnal anger, hatred, malice, envy, and uncontrolled destructiveness are purged from the heart life of the sanctified, along with slavish fear, pride, jealousy, envy, and other traits of self-life. Thus sanctification brings the emotional life of the soul back to normalcy. It should be emphasized that any emotional display under religious, political, social, or moral label which produces sinful thoughts or acts is of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. And we need not fear or repress any holy emotion, for the result is always wholesome.

In the moral realm, entire sanctification restores to man the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. His thought life becomes pure: it is under the control of the Holy Spirit to such an extent that he is enabled to master his own thought life. This power is revealed in Philippians 4:8, in the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "Fin-

ally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things." This clearly indicates that the thought of life is purged and rightly directed, to the exclusion of evil thoughts. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he."

There is a distinction between sudden thoughts or suggestions of evil, which are from without and immediately rejected, and evil thoughts, which are from within and cherished. It has been said that "we cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building nests in our hair."

In the sanctified state, man has a renewed will and a cleansed conscience. His affections are lifted from the plane of the earthly and set on things above. His will is harmonized with the will of God. His appetites are normal. His body is kept under the control of the Holy Spirit who indwells the earthly temple. His nature is that of spiritual health and wholeness—pure, without mixture; refined, holy, free from spot and stain; clear and free from idolatry and hypocrisy. This is not the abnormal state attained only by a chosen few, but it is the will of God for all mankind, the normal state of the redeemed soul for time and eternity. This is the moral state which sin wrested from man, and which entire sanctification restores.

THE SECRET

"God is my salvation . . . therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Here indeed is a great secret. How few possess it! What a bountiful, inexhaustible supply is ours—wells of salvation—deep, plentiful, ever abounding—springing up. But here is one requirement. We must do the drawing, it won't flow to us. And the bucket with which we draw it called "joy"—"therefore with joy shall ye draw." How strange that he should so specify! With joy!

Many, no doubt, come to the well to draw, but they use the wrong bucket. Some use the bucket of "unbelief"; others the bucket of disheartedness, or perhaps that of "despondency"—and then we wonder why we fail to draw. Only the bucket of joy can plumb the depths of that free-flowing supply. And Paul's admonition to give thanks at all times is simply the practical, every day outworking of this word from Isaiah. It is the spirit of thanksgiving in all circumstances that stumps the devil; and it is the one who has learned the secret of daily drawing with the right bucket that can meet the intensity of these last days. It is a "full" salvation. Therefore with joy draw—in all things give thanks for this is the will of God concerning you. What glorious abandonment! What glorious deliverance!

Do you have a need? Draw. And you know the conditions.

The Christian is the only Bible the great majority ever look at; then we ought to live as to require no commentary to explain us.