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IT IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU

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In inspired language, directed first of all to the believers at Thessalonica, and then to us in our various assemblies to-day, the Apostle Paul says, "God hath called you unto holiness"; "This is the will of God... your sanctification." He follows that with a prayer, perhaps his greatest: "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." Then, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," he adds as a kind of altar call, with a previous reminder that those who reject the blood-bought blessing also reject the Saviour who by His sacrifice on the cross made possible this great blessing.

Truly born again, and constituting one of Paul's ideal assemblies of Christians, these believers at Thessalonica were urged into something better and deeper—the experience and consequent life of heart holiness. They may have been a little off the beaten track on the matter of the Lord's second advent, but there was no doubt as to their standing in Christ, and in chapter one of the first Thessalonian epistle here are thirteen "proofs" that they had been truly born again. Entire sanctification, the blessing, and holiness, the life, is something for deeper and more wonderful than the initial work of regeneration. The believers over at Ephesus knew John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, but when asked if they had ever received the Spirit of Pentecost, they had to reply in the negative.

IT IS THE PLAN OF GOD FOR HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE

Christ died to make it possible. In his Ephesian letter Paul reasons it out something like this: through regeneration you have become united with Christ. Once far off, you have since been brought nigh. Alienated, you are now reconciled. You have been lifted out of the old "in Adam" environment and made to stand IN CHRIST "accepted in the Beloved." With me you were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world that you might be holy and without blame before Him. God grant that you might now be filled with the Spirit and so filled with all the fulness of God.

Holiness of heart and life, for the believer, was not an after thought in the plan of God, but His will from the very beginning, and under the old Mosaic economy the demands of the New Testament evangel rang forth, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The Lord Jesus surrendered His life in order to cleanse and sanctify His Church, to make her "holy and without blemish." Paul also told his Thessalonian converts that he desired to revisit them in order to "perfect that which is lacking in their faith," so that God would make them to increase and abound in love the one toward the other. And as to the ultimate purpose of it all—that their hearts might be "established unblameably in holiness before God."

Without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord. The Bible is quite clear about that, and as physical decease is not the means of our sanctification, then the work must be accomplished in our present life down here. "This IS the will of God..."

IT IS THE PROMISE OF GOD TO HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE

That which God in majesty and might demands, that God in grace provides. Every command in the Bible implies a promise, so I believe. He tells a man he has to be born again for the simple reason that he can be so born anew. The command of Ephesians 5:18 is likewise a promise and then an enabling, and the Lord breathes on us as it were and says, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

Impossible of attainment in our own strength, this blessing of sanctification can nevertheless be appropriated by the penitent believer. There is a highway of holiness over which the redeemed of the Lord may walk, and God has made it possible for us to "step up" onto it in obedient faith, and so to walk this pathway of promise.

The promises of God are sure and certain, but they are also conditional. The command to be ye holy, is a promise that ye shall be holy, and implies a responsibility to be just that. We offer a hundred and one excuses as to why we've not "gone on to perfection" (Heb. 5:1) such as: "I've never heard the message preached." That may be true. I, for example, could honestly have said that, but it's no real excuse. There are places where the full counsel of God are faithfully proclaimed—there is this and like-minded magazines, there is the Word of God itself. And though you may not be able to dot all the i's and cross all the t's with us of the Wesleyan persuasion, you just cannot escape the call of holiness as it stands written on the Sacred page.

It is inbred sin that hinders our ascent of the holy hill. It is inbred sin that binds us to the lower self. There is that infection of nature which remains even in the regenerate, happy though they may be in the knowledge of sins forgiven and their personal acceptance with Christ.

And there is but one way of deliverance from this indwelling virus. It is the way of the cross, for the fountain opened in the Saviour's side has been made for sin and for uncleanness, and God's Book tells me that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). That is John's way of saying what Paul argued out in Romans 6, that "the body of sin" can be done away."

IT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE LIVES OF HIS REDEEMED

There must be an outworking of that which God has wrought within. Sanctification is a blessing to be received and then a life to be lived.

(Continued on Page 4)