

FOUNDATIONS FOR FACING FORWARD:

---

# HOLINESS



**RANDALL E. HOWARD**

---

GENERAL OVERSEER

FOUNDATIONS FOR FACING FORWARD:

---

# HOLINESS



Written and compiled by  
**Randall E. Howard**  
General Overseer, Church of God of Prophecy

Distributed at the 96th International Assembly

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## Foundations for Facing Forward: Holiness

<b>Introduction: Holiness off the Radar</b>	<b>3</b>
Holy Ghost Fire .....	5
Holiness: Walking in the Spirit .....	7
You Can Live the Impossible Life .....	11
Experiencing God .....	15
Transformation .....	18
Cleansing Through the Blood .....	21
Cleansing Through the Word .....	23
Holiness Through Mind Transformation .....	26
Crucifixion and Holiness .....	30
Holiness Motivation: Life or Law .....	33
Love: The Goal of Life .....	37
The Call of Holiness .....	41
The Holiness Movement.....	45

# INTRODUCTION

---

## Holiness off the Radar

*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).*

Amazingly, during the last four decades, holiness and sanctification have all but disappeared off the radar of spirituality in Western Christian culture. No doubt, there are many factors that have contributed to this erosion. Whatever the reason, many polls show, consistently, that there is no significant difference between the behavior of secular culture and Christianity. This writing aims at making a new case for sanctification and describing a new relevance for holiness in today's context. After all, through time, revival and awakening have often been seen as a renewal of divine power to draw the lost out of the darkness of evil and to transform them into the image of Christ. This certainly involves the grace that sanctifies and the call that ignites passion for holiness.

Today is a moment of opportunity for the Christian nation with regard to sanctification. Christianity has been charged as being judgmental, legalistic, and harsh toward society. Within our ranks, most would confess that we want to leave behind the former, outward focus on behaviors and shift to holiness of heart that will manifest Christ's character. With this falling away of holiness focus in the Kingdom, we have the opportunity to put away negative baggage of the past and to announce new relevance and applications for sanctification significant for today.

The Spirit will empower God's people toward holiness, and He can guide the body to the new perspectives and manifestations that this generation most desperately needs. As with all spiritual renewals of Christian history, these perspectives may appear different and may vary from the way sanctification has been experienced in generations gone by. But closer review will

demonstrate that the foundations of holiness will produce the fruit of godly character and a passionate, vibrant church.

According to the need of the individual believer, holiness offers powerful grace to move the person out of the grip of sin, upward in spite of the weight of carnality, and onward toward the image of Christ. Holiness in any generation will be concerned with defeating sin's deception and activating godly character, especially love. Each of these avenues toward holiness contributes to those ends, and the uniting, activating principle is the work of the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin, convinces of righteousness, connects us to grace-energizers, consumes us with His passion, and consummates our journey to the image of Christ.

## Holy Ghost Fire

While preparing eighth-grade students to obtain a Bunsen-Burner license, a science teacher was asked the following question: "What is fire exactly?" This teacher wanted to direct the student to the understanding that when the right substances are present and the temperature arrives at a certain point, fire results. But she realized that a technical answer about fire being a rapid chemical reaction known as oxidation would be beyond the comprehension of the student. So she responded, "For the moment, perhaps a better question would be what is happening chemically before, during, and after we witness or feel fire?"

As the students were adjusting their flames from yellow to blue, it was important that they understood that the original substances would change as a fire continued to burn, and those substances would burn literally into a different substance. This truth about fire can also be applied to our understanding of God.

Hebrews 12:29 states, "For our God is a consuming fire." Therefore, we who are of a particular substance, once coming to God who is all-consuming, will be changed and made into something new. Furthermore, fire needs oxygen and some kind of fuel to burn.

John the Baptist taught, ". . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11, 12). The Holy Ghost baptism that Jesus fanned will flame up in such a way as to reach our innermost core and remove our errors, prejudices, and selfishness, which is the chaff in the depths of our souls.

The lyrics of an old, spiritual chorus say, "God's got a fire, and He don't need no matches." God's fire has the capacity to burn incessantly, and it produces both heat and light. It is true that if we will allow God's fire to consume even just one thing in our life, He will give us back something purified and infinitely precious.

There was a time not so long ago when it was a great compliment to say of a minister, "He is on fire for God," or to state, "Revival fire

has broken out.” In both cases, someone had allowed themselves to be touched by the fire of God and were witnessed to being changed by that fire. It was the witness of the changed life that both believers and religious skeptics found fascinating. An entire movement known as the Charismatic movement was formed based on this simple witness of lives changing from status quo—predictable and staleness—to fervency, uniqueness, and freshness.

Fire is luminous, incandescent, hot, glowing, intense heat. As such, the phenomenon of fire is fascinating. Is there evidence of Holy Ghost fire in your life? Let us ask ourselves the question, “What is happening before, during, and after I witness and feel Holy Ghost fire?” The answer ought to be igniting.

*Carmen Carmen Casey  
Pastor and Wife of the National Overseer  
Queensland, Australia*

Note: This article appeared in the July 2010 issue of the *White Wing Messenger*.

## Holiness: Walking in the Spirit

Carmen Casey wrote in the preceding article that the fire of the Spirit would change the substance that is on fire. That is possibly the most direct and simple way to show how the Spirit of God works to produce holiness in the life of a believer. Under His influence, we are changed, constantly being transformed, step by step, as the Spirit's fire burns and works in us.

The illustration of the refiner's fire is a favorite Scripture example to describe this process (Malachi 3:3). The ore of a fine metal such as gold is heated in the fire. Impurities are burned away as they cannot stand the intense heat of the fire. The gold ore is melted and changes from hard and brittle metal to molten ore, easily poured and formed. The fire continues to purify until the reflection of the refiner can be seen looking on.

So the fire of God is at work to purify all believers who will not resist or run from the intense heat of God's Spirit-fire process at work. God's fire in the soul burns out impurities once comfortable in their cold, dark recesses. The Spirit fire melts all hardness of heart and makes the believer pliable, malleable, and easily poured into the forms of God's will and purpose. And the consuming fire of God will not stop until the reflection of Father God is seen upon the purified believer's life. Certainly, the Holy Spirit, like the fire of God, is a primary agent in the holiness of the child of God.

Consider a few scriptures that will help us see the work of the Holy Spirit deeply involved in God's process toward holiness in the life of a believer:

*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost (Romans 15:16).* It is possible that in our heritage as a Pentecostal body, it may have been overlooked that a believer is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Paul and Peter both use the phrase, "Sanctification of the Spirit" as they write about believers (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Surely we know that the Bible calls the Holy Spirit

He; and wherever He is present, He will be active in bringing forth holiness in the life of believers. Surely any generation that allows the demonstration of the Spirit to become more important in focus than His function for holiness, that generation would be in danger of straying from the genuine work and personality of the Spirit.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* (Galatians 5:16). Most would agree that holiness is greatly aided by any influence that will help believers avoid domination by the carnal desires. Paul clearly states that walking in the Spirit will bring this level of victory to believers' lives. He gives the emphatic statement, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not. . . ." This is a scriptural promise of what the Holy Spirit will bring to any life yielded to His abiding presence. The passage goes on to list the works of the flesh first and then the fruit of the Spirit. This close connection of carnal works and Spirit fruit is a further step in Paul's contrast to point out that our walk in the Spirit will not only help avoid carnal works, it will also bring forth obvious Spirit-given fruits in the believers' lives. This kind of life that avoids carnal works and demonstrates Spirit fruit is one way of describing a life of holiness activated by the Spirit.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:1, 2). In writing to the Romans, Paul includes his message of "life in the Spirit" as man's solution to sinful flesh. Of all the passages in the New Testament, this is possibly the most extensive in declaring the Spirit's power to bring victory over sin for the believer. Twenty-one times, the Spirit is mentioned in this chapter. Note a few of Paul's positive declarations about "life in the Spirit":

- Walking in the Spirit brings no condemnation (v. 1).
- The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death (v. 2).

- The Spirit-minded believer enjoys life and peace (v. 6).
- Life comes through the indwelling Spirit of God (vv. 10–13).
- Those led by the Spirit are the sons of God (v. 14).

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's* (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). The indwelling presence of the Spirit of God draws Paul to use the temple comparison. Our bodies are the temple of God. Even today, the word temple evokes an image of a sacred place. This was many times greater in Paul's day as he wrote these words. Now as then we know a temple is a place where irreverent things should not be allowed, much less degrading or immoral things. Paul is making the point that with the entrance of the Holy Spirit into our lives, we instantly become the abiding place for the Third Person of God, His Spirit. The result is that all must move toward the aim of glorifying God. Naturally, sin and worldly filth is dismissed, and all that honors and lifts our Lord is welcomed.

*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us* (Romans 5:5). The pinnacle of holiness is love as we learn in the Great Commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord your God . . ." (Matthew 22:37). Here, Paul tells the Romans that it is the Spirit of God that disseminates God's love into our hearts. It is not natural to love as God loves, to react as God reacts. Human beings do not have the quality in them to generate such a love. Try as we may, this is not possible. Yet by the work of the Holy Spirit, God's love is divinely activated in our hearts. Without this help of the Spirit, we would only have a holiness without its crowning quality—God's love.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Romans 8:14). Holiness implies an ongoing relationship with our holy God, lived out as Christians are led by the Spirit. Our walk with the Spirit develops intimacy with the God of divine holiness. As in any relationship, the more believers are with God, the more they become like Him. The maxim is true; we become

what we worship. Let saints everywhere fervently worship God in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. As we worship and as we walk in the Spirit, we will find the holiness of God manifest more and more through our lives.

## You Can Live the Impossible Life

### Psalm 24:1–6

Today's television and movie viewer is inundated with paranormal shows that emphasize the supernatural powers among humans. Some of the most popular movies and television shows such as *Supernatural*, *Twilight*, *Heroes*, *Superman*, and *Harry Potter* encourage people to believe in the miraculous and supernatural. The present Western culture is quite open to the possibility of supernatural occurrences.

Whether for general entertainment or actual belief in the occults, there seems to be a greater acceptance of the miraculous than the possibility of holiness. Even as our movement embraces our Pentecostal heritage, at times, it appears some individuals are uncomfortable with the topic of holiness or the doctrine of sanctification.

This sense of discomfort may be directly related to the secular culture's mantra, "Nobody's perfect!" This notion means that everyone, including believers, is expected to fail, disappoint, and live below an understood standard of morality. In fact, the problem with the secular society is that there is no belief in an objective standard of morality. However, the Holy Scripture is given to make known and clear what is truth and how to live in it (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

A few years ago, one of the top Christian songs voiced the chorus, "A saint is just a sinner who fell down and got back up." Is that all that a saint is? Isn't there more to the sanctified life than failure?

Haven't we all heard the rebuke, "Don't be holier than thou"? This is a challenge for believers to stop acting as if there is a standard by which we all can be held accountable. All of these standards seem to follow the general moorings of our culture, which assumes that we cannot live holy.

While Scripture acknowledges that believers can and will fall short of God's righteousness, the provision of Christ's sacrifice continues to affect the life of the believer after salvation by offering forgiveness and power to overcome sin and live above reproach

(1 John 1:9). It is still God's will that man be holy and sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Our faith must possess this powerful principle of the sanctified life.

In Psalm 24, the psalmist describes the attitude of those who live the life of holiness. The life of holiness is lived out of the belief that all of life belongs to God. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (v. 1).

God's holiness is a possessive, eternal principle, and when we embrace holiness, we, too, see God as owning everything. He owns the world, the people in it, and all that pertains to humanity—our bodies, our breath, and our time. In reality, all that people lay claim to in this world is rightfully owned by God!

The secular mind perceives humanity as independent of any creator or accountability. The believer's conviction of God's holiness sees life in a vastly different way. The believer resembles the belief of the angelic beings of Isaiah 6:3, who cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory!"

The impossible life is lived with spiritual ambition. The psalmist asks the question, "Who [can] **ascend** the hill of the Lord? . . ." (Psalm 24:3 NIV). The psalmist is well aware of Moses' request to see the fullness of God's presence, and he desires the same.

The psalmist also acknowledges the existence of personal effort, sacrifice, and faith. However, the emphasis is the desire. One can live the impossible life if one desires it. The psalmist is **willing to climb the mountain** in order to get to where God is! This mountain is reserved completely for God, but through faith, one can also be in the holy presence of God.

### **God Is on Top of the Mountain.**

Mountains always separate the few from the majority. Those who desire to be holy must and will separate themselves in pursuit of God from the majority who are satisfied with a deistic existence at best. The pursuit of God and His holiness necessitates that we refuse to let the majority determine and shape our standard or pursuit of God.

In Matthew 5, after the multitudes were following Jesus because of His miracles, only a few individuals followed Him up onto a

hillside to hear Him teach the ways of the Kingdom. Believers must pursue God and desire to see what God sees, hear what God says, and be where God is! When one pursues God, He will visit in the glory of His holiness. When Moses pursued the glory of God, God revealed Himself (Exodus 33:18, 19). The great perspective of the psalmist is that he believes that anyone with a desire to be holy and in pursuit of God can climb to the presence of God.

I can remember being a child in our movement and hearing the words of a hymn that grasped the desire of this psalmist. The hymn is called "Higher Ground":

I'm pressing on the upward way,  
New heights I'm gaining every day;  
Still praying as I onward bound,  
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,  
By faith, on heaven's table land,  
A higher plane than I have found;  
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

My heart has no desire to stay  
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;  
Though some may dwell where those abound,  
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,  
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;  
For faith has caught the joyful sound,  
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height  
And catch a gleam of glory bright;  
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found,  
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Holiness is the desire for something more meaningful, higher, and deeper in our lives. The one who desires and seeks this life will be awarded by the presence of God—a life characterized by purity, righteousness, and truth. For many, it is unattainable, but for the believer, it is very much possible.

Holiness is possible if we have the proper attitude toward the role God fills in the world and when we are willing to pursue Him—though it costs us much. God speaks of those who pursue as a generation of seekers. Pursue the Lord with an attitude of reverence and an ambition born out of spiritual poverty, and you, too, will live the impossible life.

*Trevor Reid*  
*Co-Director of International Youth Ministries*  
*Cleveland, Tennessee*

This article appeared in the June 2010 issue of the *White Wing Messenger*.

## Experiencing God

“Our knowledge of God rests on the revelation of His personal presence. . . . Of such a presence, it must be true that to those who have never been confronted with it, argument is useless while to those who have, it is superfluous.”<sup>1</sup>

### Knowing by Yada

*Yada* is the Hebrew word for “to know,” which is used often in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the Greek word *ginoskein* carries similar meaning from the Hebrew understanding and use of *yada* because the New Testament writers wrote from the foundation of their Jewish backgrounds where *yada* was prevalent.

This is a word that refers to knowing more by the heart than through the mind, knowing not from objective observation but from active and intentional engagement in lived experience. Knowledge in the Hebrew mind is not thought of as a possession of information. It is, rather, knowledge for its exercise or actualization.<sup>2</sup>

Knowing in the Hebrew mind was more relational, experiential, and engaging. The modern Greek mind of the New Testament day had shifted to see knowledge as being objective, detached, and rational. With the coming of Christ and the Gospel, it was the personal, relational knowing of the Hebrew *yada* that most effectively conveyed His truth.

Christ was a person, the Son of God, to be known and trusted intimately. He was not simply propositional truth or factual documentation. He called for personal response in life commitment far beyond intellectual assent. To know Him, believers must experience Him (*yada*). No one can know Christ because they have studied Him or observed Him (Greek mind); He must be believed, trusted, obeyed, received, or, in a word, experienced in a personal way (*yada*).

### **Jesus**

In John 17:3, Jesus calls for believers to experience Him: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” With understanding of *yada*, knowing this scripture turns from the shallow, superficial salvation knowledge of mental assent to the deep, relational knowing of a lifetime challenge to communion with Christ. Jesus was not implying that His disciples have mere acquaintance knowledge; He wanted them to experience a rich relationship in God for a life of ministry and fulfillment.

### **Paul**

Philippians 3:10 states, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” This scripture shows the high call to experience God. If anyone had experienced God, surely it was Paul, the greatest missionary evangelist of the New Testament. Yet at the end of his ministry, he was still seeking to “know” (experience) more of God. Paul realized there would always be more of God to discover. This will be the unfolding revelation of eternity.

### **Moses**

Exodus 33:13 records, “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight. . . .” Moses, in this chapter, showed a heart that was intent on experiencing God, intimately. He heard God and was directed by an angel, God appeared in the pillar of cloud, and God spoke to him face to face, yet Moses still pressed for further encounter—to see God’s glory! Moses demonstrated a driving passion to know God deeply.

### **Application**

The word *yada* is used in the Old Testament for intimate friendship. The love between Jonathan and David illustrates this. Also, covenant relations that bound men and families together, or even the intimacy of the act of lovemaking, are described in the

Old Testament by the word *yada*. Shallow knowing, limited to information or factual content, does not approach the engagement or commitment of these Old Testament uses. This is how Christ seeks to be “known” by His followers.

Another illustration is the comparison of newlyweds knowing one another to the senior couple, who have been married for more than 50 years. The former know one another well enough to be married while the latter have a knowledge of one another that has been developed by the years of experience together. Again, this is how Christ seeks to be known by His followers.

### **Experiencing and Knowing God**

Knowing God “becomes seeking God, not knowledge, fullness, not facts, [but] a firsthand encounter where meeting Him is better than a secondhand testimony of Him. Let God become as real and full to us as the world was when one was a sinner. In sin, the world was not studied to learn sin. It was experienced through activity and involvement. One engages in sin to know it. One could never say they know sin by reading about it. They have not known its vice-like grip or destructive cravings. Neither should one say they have known God from a simple mental assent to His existence and some attendance to religious gatherings.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Dallas Willard, *In Search of Guidance* (New York, NY: Harper and Collins, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 141.

<sup>3</sup>Francis Frangipane, *Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God* (Cedar Rapids: IA: Advancing Church Publications, 1986), p. 79.

*Note:* This section is an adaptation taken from *Foundations: Spiritual Formation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1997), pp. 16–18.

## Transformation

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

“Apart from a radically new principle of life, humanity simply cannot advance far. It is only the real presence of Christ in His mature people interspersed throughout the ‘secular’ life that will cause the necessary [reform]. . . . The real presence of Christ as a governing force will come solely as His called-out people occupy their stations in the holiness and power characteristic of Him as they demonstrate to the world the way to live that is best in every respect.”<sup>1</sup>

**Principle:** People with receptive hearts are transformed in the presence of Christ.

Transformation is the goal for which God has destined all those who will believe on Him. He tells us in Romans 12:2 not to be conformed to this world, but to be “transformed by the renewing” of our minds. As taught in the scripture above, transformation is a part of the redeeming act at salvation; we are regenerated, made new. Yet transformation is also a process by which Christ is shaping believers into His likeness, conforming us to His image. This is not a crisis experience, but it is a process of His grace working in us.

Transformation is illustrated by the prophet Isaiah. His encounter with God is described in Isaiah 6. Notice that Isaiah saw the Lord and experienced His glory. From this, Isaiah was convicted, he was cleansed, and he was called. His life was touched, never to be the same, after having experienced the transforming presence of God.

Transformation is also illustrated in Peter’s life as described in Luke 5:1–11. At the revelation of whom Peter had met by the waterside, he responded in several ways. These responses are

frequently characteristic of those who realize they are in the presence of the Lord:

He <b>fell</b> .	His <b>self-sufficiency</b> melted.	He was <b>humbled</b> .
He <b>confessed</b> .	His <b>self-righteousness</b> melted.	He was <b>repentant</b> .
He was <b>astonished</b> .	His <b>self-understanding</b> melted.	He <b>believed</b> .
He <b>responded</b> .	His <b>self-employment</b> melted.	He was <b>called</b> .

**Principle:** Transformation can be experienced gradually as well as instantaneously. It is a never-ending process in which the believer is being conformed to the image of Christ.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18; see also Romans 8:29; 12:1, 2; Galatians 4:19; Colossians 3:10).

Here, the *transformation* is described as “metamorphosis.” We understand metamorphosis as being the slow-changing process of growth in plants, which is empowered through exposure to the sun. Similarly, we, as believers, are engaged in the continuous, ongoing process of growth, which is empowered by exposure to Christ.

Dallas Willard writes, “The approach to wholeness is for humankind a process of great length and difficulty that engages all our own powers to their fullest extent over a long course of experience. But we don’t like to hear this. We are somewhat misled by the reports of experiences by many great spiritual leaders, and we assign their greatness to these great moments they were given, neglecting the years of slow progress they endured before them.

“Francis de Sales wisely counsels us not to expect transformation in a moment though it is possible for God to give it:

The ordinary purification and healing, whether of the body or of the mind, takes place only little by little, by passing from one degree to another with patience. The angels upon Jacob’s ladder had wings, yet they flew not but ascended and descended in order from one step to another. The soul that rises from sin to devotion may be compared to the dawning of the day,

which at its approach does not expel the darkness instantaneously but only little by little (Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Image Books, 1957, pp. 43, 44).

“Thus, it is necessary to say that crisis conversion, as understood in Christian circles, is not the same thing as the *required transformation of the self*. The fact that a long course of experience is needed for the transformation is not set aside when we are touched by the new life from above. Some well-known scenes from the life of one of Jesus’ closest friends, Simon Peter, the ‘rock,’ who, upon occasion, more resembled the pile of shifting sand, illustrates this fact well.”<sup>2</sup>

Key: Transformation naturally takes place, whether as a crisis or gradually or both, through exposure to the revelation of the presence of Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup>Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.

Note: This section is an adaptation taken from *Foundations: Spiritual Formation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1997), pp. 13–16.

## Cleansing Through the Blood

One aspect of the sanctification tradition through Christian history has been the concept of cleansing. The writer of Psalm 51 cried out in prayer, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (v. 10). As believers are redeemed out from the world, there is a call for cleansing from the residue of that very world order and its fundamentals. Then, as believers live and work in this world, there is a need for ongoing cleansing from the influences inherent there that so easily find their way into believers’ minds and hearts. No matter how the need of cleansing is described, there are gracious agents that have been provided for this washing work in the spirit and soul. The blood of the Lamb and the Word of God are the two most prominent as we look into the Scriptures.

The writer of Psalm 51 also prays, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (v. 7). Out of the Old Testament comes the idea of blood applied through a sacrifice for the cleansing of sin. Hyssop was a tree whose branch was used to dip into the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkle that blood on the altar. Today Christ is our sacrifice, and His blood is the payment for sin and a divine agent of cleansing. The Psalmist cried, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (v. 2).

What a gracious offer we as believers can experience—a cleansing application of the blood of Jesus. In the same way that we are refreshed to shower off the filth of labor, sweat, and grime, there is a refreshing experience as we believe for the blood of Christ to wash away the filth of the world from our heart and soul. Cleansing from guilt, release from the enemy’s dominating strongholds, liberty from our own carnal influences, bathing in the refreshing divine flow, healing of wounds, bitterness, and enmity are all blessings of a sanctifying cleansing. Whether experiencing cleansing for the first experience in sanctification’s work or feeling the intermittent refreshing of new cleansings, the blood of Christ is effective.

The New Testament reminds us, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself

without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). It is so easy for the dust of a lost and fallen world to settle on anyone of us as we move about in this life. Attitudes can attach themselves without notice. Perspectives and mindsets can settle over us. Our human nature is often susceptible to emotional influences void of grace such as bitterness or enmity. Thank God, we have a Savior who has provided initial victory from our fallen situation and offers ongoing cleansing through His precious blood. Oh, the joy of kneeling to ask for a new application of this blood-washing grace and to rise with assurance and joy, renewed and cleansed once again.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psalm 51:10–12).

"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (19:12–14).

"Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away" (65:3).

"Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake" (79:9).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

## Cleansing Through the Word

Scripture also points unmistakably to the living Word of God as a victorious agent of cleansing in the life of a believer. The Psalm writer testified, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). Paul wrote to the Ephesians in his classic passage to the church, saying, “That he [Christ] might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). And Christ in His role as our High Priest prayed for all believers, saying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Clearly, the Word of God has been given a major role in the cleansing process of growing believers.

Paul wrote to Timothy using the classic words so well-known by the church today: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Paul understood that God’s Word was the agent that would be able to influence the life of a young believer still permeated with his old life, cleansing and aligning that life to a new and living way, the way of righteousness. God gave the Word to bring about this miracle that a life under sin’s destructive power could become perfect and thoroughly supplied for all good works.

Mothers and nutritionists have a proverb in common as they tell us, “We are what we eat.” Information technologists tell us that a computer is no smarter than the information fed into it: “Garbage in, garbage out.” So there is logic when a believer makes the commitment to pour the living Word into his soul. It is eternal, divine Word, and it naturally transforms and influences all who receive it. This is not a common book. It activates more than common words. God has given a revelation of Himself to man through the pages of His Holy Word. When these pages of revelation are poured into the hearts and minds of believers, a divine reaction takes place, cleansing away the former life and creating new life in the image and will of God. The Bible asks the question, “How can a young man clean up his life?” And the answer

is given immediately: "By giving focused attention to God's Word" (Psalm 119:9 paraphrased). This is much like what Jesus told His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

What word does the church of Jesus Christ have for the weary sinner who longs to be free and clean from the dogging influence of evil and destruction in this world? Is there a word of hope? Is there a power to bring release? Perhaps, Isaiah has God's answer for us: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (1:18).

Thoughtful study of each of the passages below will bring anyone to the solid conclusion that God's Word will cleanse any life that fills his mind and soul with its truth:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (119:9-11).

"I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word" (v. 101).

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

"For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:5).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of

the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. . . . All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17).

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

## Holiness Through Mind Transformation

The Word of God has transforming power to move believers on toward the image and glory of Christ. Christian history has often interpreted Paul's words to the Corinthian saints as a reference to the Word of God: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Certainly, the Word of God is a source of the glory of God like a mirror reflecting His mind and heart. So when believers regularly look into that source, transformation will naturally take place. Can anyone behold the glory of God in any form and not experience some level of Christ's transforming power? The Word of God is one sure source of His glorious revelation, and the more we come to encounter its glory, the more transforming influence is released upon our lives.

Paul described this transformation process with the term, ". . . from glory to glory. . . ." In many ways, this is exactly what sanctification is all about—the steps and stages in the Christian walk where we move from being a fallen, lost, carnal sinner, through God's many touches and influences of glory, to reach the goal of the image of God reproduced more and more in us. Holy Scripture is a primary agent in this cleansing and transforming process.

It is good to understand that this transformation activity of the Word of God includes cleansing from negative influences, but it also activates the process of building godly character into the believer's life. On the one hand, it is like the mountain stream that purifies the water by rushing over the rocks, dispelling impurities as it flows along. The work of the Word of God applied to our lives often has the same effect of discarding impurities as the waters of revelation and truth flow over our souls. On the other hand, that rushing stream is constantly applying pressure over those mountain stones so that, through the years, those stones are changed, rounded, and made smooth by the water's constant pressure. In the same way, the constant application of God's eternal Word is at work

over time reforming and shaping our hearts into the glorious image of Christ Jesus.

James helps expand the idea of dramatic change through the influence of the Word as he writes, “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). Here, James uses the illustration of grafting, which is often used by agriculture in cultivating fruit trees. Clearly, he is speaking in the context of cleansing as he begins by asking the saints to set aside filthiness and naughtiness. James then shows the way by calling the believers to receive the “engrafted” word.

Some individuals may not realize that the process of engrafting God’s Word into our hearts is the grace-enabling activity that empowers us to lay aside such negative life influences as filthiness and naughtiness and develop Christ-likeness. Much like a Delicious apple tree can receive a branch of a Fuji apple tree through the science of grafting, the believer can receive the purifying Word of God grafted into a life that has been marred by temptation or ungodly influences. Imagine the power of filling one’s mind with the living, eternal Word that will bring forth the fruit of godliness and Christ-likeness. As the Psalmist said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

A believer might even target an area of weakness and begin to graft in specific portions of the Word to purge out that weakness and bring in the Word’s specific victory. For example, a believer might struggle with bitterness that seems impossible to overcome and set aside. Through the engrafting principle James mentions, that believer can seek out powerful scriptures that speak of victory over bitterness through forgiveness, mercy, and grace. The force of these scriptures can be engrafted into the soul of that believer through meditation, memorization, and penetrating saturation. Ultimately, the power of engrafting the Word will bring forth fruit of gracious mercy and forgiveness, breaking the reign of bitterness in that life.

This principle of transformation through the Word is touched by Paul as he writes that classic scripture to the Romans: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing

of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). As shown above, the Word of God has the power to transform our lives. There are many influences vying for the power to change us constantly such as culture, peers, advertising, institutions, etc. Most of these are not motivated by God's grace. What can a believer do to resist conformity to all of these pressures around us? As we apply the Word of God through reading, meditation, memorization, study, and even praying the Word, the life and divine influence of the Word begins to restructure our thoughts to the thoughts of God found in His Word. We are released from the conforming influences of the world and set free to live and walk like Christ.

Finally, the Word of God to Joshua becomes our guide as we set out to fill our hearts with God's Word and experience its transforming power: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:21–26).

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1–5).

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1–3).

“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (119:97).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24).

## Crucifix and Holiness

I have heard it said that Christ on the cross is a picture of salvation, and our self on the cross is a picture of sanctification. The Bible is clear in the call for believers to die as the famous words of Christ reflect: “. . . take up [your] cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). The cross was the cruel instrument of death. Christ was willing to take that suffering for us, and now He calls us to find our place on that cross ourselves to experience His fullness and defeat Satan’s deceiving advances through our flesh.

Even though crucifixion of the flesh has been a central teaching of the church through the ages, today it is not in vogue and is rarely heard from the pulpit. The trend of culture for decades has been to extol the goodness of man including human nature. Though the fall corrupted man’s nature, it seems the current response of Christianity has been to accommodate this movement toward man’s goodness. It has become politically incorrect to preach and teach that the flesh is the enemy’s favorite avenue for deception and temptation to evil. The spirit of the day seems highly sensitive to any assertion that self-denial and crucifixion are needed. So with carnality and crucifixion out of bounds for preaching, the enemy is at liberty to work on the believer’s fleshly nature to extend his influence of evil. And the believer is left weakened, if not helpless, to live a victorious Christian life depending solely on confession, mercy, and partial grace application, unable to move on toward perfection (2 Corinthians 7:1).

On the other hand, Paul writes of the virtues of crucifixion of the flesh profoundly in several of his letters. Nowhere does he write more clearly and forcefully of this than in Romans 6. Observe these precepts: Death to sin denies continuous sin. We can be buried in death like Christ to bring resurrection like Christ to new life. Our old man can be crucified. The body of sin can be destroyed. We do not have to serve sin. God forbid that we sin just because we have grace. Each of these truths is described in this powerful chapter.

Of course, the classic passage of self-crucifixion would be Paul’s testimony in Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ:

nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

This call to the Galatian church is much like Paul's words in Romans 12:1 in which he asks believers to present themselves as a ". . . living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God. . . ." This is the key and the distinct difference from the concept of sacrifice in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the crucified man lives on, yet in an entirely new mode. To the Galatians, Paul explains clearly when he says, ". . . I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . . ." Romans 6 also helps to explain this idea, saying, ". . . reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ . . ." (v. 11). So the New Testament call to crucifixion is a call to die to self and sin and to live in Christ by faith.

Paul tells the Corinthian church, "I die daily." So this crucifixion that Paul calls for is a goal that can be sought daily. In the course of life, all believers sense times when they feel more alive to the flesh than they are to Christ and His Spirit. Our comfort comes in knowing that by grace we can seek to join Christ in both His death and resurrection to new life daily. We do not have to live by the impulses of our carnality and human nature. We can arise with Christ to life with Him in victory. Though the culture of the day may feel crucifixion is harsh, tortuous, and extreme religion, those who experience its grace know it is the path to an entirely new power for living in Christ by faith.

This ongoing journey to move upward into the holiness of Christ can be seen in Paul's deep desire. He writes to the Philippian saints, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

As we reflect on the call to holiness, may we find God's grace placing in us the same passions to follow on toward the image of Christ that we see in Paul.

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24, 25).

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (6:14).

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him . . .” (2 Timothy 2:11).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1).

## Holiness Motivation: Life or Law

The journey to holiness is God's call and is intended for our good. It is meant to release the abundance of God into our lives. It is possible, however, to turn this call into a set of soul-killing laws. Law-bound faith breathes death.<sup>1</sup>

Principle: We must avoid externalism, laws, and control over others while we make every attempt at cultivating or drawing near for God's work of inner transformation. When we say law, we are referring to rules of religion that take the place of the person and presence of Christ. When a mother leaves her son, she gives him rules to follow in her absence. But when she is present, the rules are transcended by her presence and their personal relating moment by moment. So it is with Christ and our journey to be formed in His image, which is holy. We must not slip to merely following His rules when He wants to be with us and constantly in us through the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Legalism is paramount to superstition. "Legalism holds that overt actions conforming to rules for explicit behavior is what makes us right and pleasing to God and worthy of blessing."<sup>2</sup> Superstition actually does the same thing in incantations and spells. Jesus compares such religious behaviors to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). It is interesting to note that the Pharisees were compelled by two types of motivation—pride or fear. If a person was a "good" Pharisee, then they felt the pride of knowing they were among the best Jews of the nation. If they were a "not so good" Pharisee, then they were motivated by the fear that they needed to improve to avoid exposure as a breaker of the Law. Either motivation is far below the divine motive of LOVE.

A farmer has no power to produce grain; only God can do this. Still, the farmer wisely understands his role of placing the seed in the right environment for growth. Believers do not have the ability to produce spiritual fruit or eternal effect. At the same time, every believer can nurture the environment for growth in their own lives—moving them forward in holiness.

Imagine there are two, deep ravines on either side of a narrow ledge. The ledge is the path of spiritual formation through the disciplines toward holiness. To the right is moral bankruptcy through human striving (legalism). This is known as moralism. To the left is moral bankruptcy through liberty, called antinomianism (lawlessness). Only the ledge leads to God's transforming work from glory to glory and faith to faith. All Christian history reports failures on both sides. God calls us to relationship, not rules and formulas or lawlessness and nominal faith.

### **The Key of Balance**

Full awareness of our dependence on the Holy Spirit with full understanding of our responsibility to respond to His will is the balance that must be maintained. Overemphasis on either truth will disturb that balance. Being totally conscious of our dependence may create passivity while total awareness of one's responsibility generates guilt and stress. Between those two poles lies the fruitful Christian life. Note the following scriptures that support each of these themes:

- Dependence: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16; see also Ecclesiastes 9:10–12; 2 Corinthians 3:5, 6; John 3:27; 6:63; 15:5; Jeremiah 10:23; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10; Proverbs 3:5, 6; Zechariah 4:6).
- Our responsibility: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1; see also 2 Timothy 2:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 1:5–8; 1 John 1:7; Colossians 3:5 ["mortify"], 8 ["put off"], 12 ["put on"]; Philippians 2:12 ["work out"]).
- Grace: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13; see also Colossians 1:29; 1 Corinthians 15:8, 9; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Corinthians 15:8–10).

### **Origen's Metaphor of Grace and Work**

Our life is like a ship on a voyage. The wind is like God's hand moving us in His will. We, as the captain, must work with the wind to set the sails for movement. Without the wind, our work is

fruitless; without our cooperation, the wind's power is wasted in directing our lives.

### **Love**

Spiritual disciplines are not works to obtain righteousness, but a love relationship where the suitor takes advantage of every opportunity to be in the presence of the object of his love. Henry Nouwen said it well:

This eternal community of love is the center and source of Jesus' spiritual life, a life of uninterrupted attentiveness to the Father in the spirit of love. It is from this life that Jesus' ministry grows. His eating and fasting, His praying and acting, His traveling and resting, His preaching and teaching, His exorcising and healing were all done in this spirit of love. We will never understand the meaning of Jesus' richly varied ministry unless we see how the many things are rooted in the one thing: listening to the Father in the intimacy of perfect love. When we see this, we will also realize that the goal of Jesus' ministry is nothing less than to bring us into this most intimate community.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mary and Martha**

The contrast between the two sisters of Lazarus clearly describes the contrasting motivations of love or law (Luke 10:38). Martha was full of duty, faithfully serving in the kitchen and carrying out the tasks she felt were urgent. Mary, though, moved close to Jesus out of desire and keen interest; she was content listening, worshiping, and adoring in the Master's presence. She, too, felt the press of the urgent, yet she chose the important first. Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (vv. 41, 42).

Consider this comparison: Martha received the Lord while Mary stayed by the Lord. Martha was cumbered, careful, and troubled while Mary was content. Martha spoke to the Lord while

Mary listened at His feet. Martha was distant in the kitchen while Mary was close. Martha served Jesus while Mary worshipped Him. Martha had a grievance while Mary was at peace. Martha showed continuous action while Mary was still in the presence of Christ. Martha received a reproof while Mary received a high commendation. Martha was disturbed by many things, but Mary chose the one needful thing. Martha was forever known as the dutiful server while Mary was immortalized by Christ.

Lord, lead us on to know that Your holiness comes to us in a loving fellowship with You and not through soul-draining laws of religion.

---

<sup>1</sup>William Barclay paraphrased by Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978).

<sup>2</sup>Foster, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Nouwen quoted by Dallas Willard, *In Search of Guidance* (New York, NY: Harper and Collins, 1993), p. 146.

*Note:* This section is an adaptation taken from *Foundations: Spiritual Formation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1997), pp. 24–26.

## Love: The Goal of Life

The goal of life for the early believer was love, and humility was the way to attain this. Love was their powerful way of disarming a violent society. They had no political influence, no economic power, and no massive social structure, but they had genuine love for God, for one another, and for the world. They touched their world without confrontation or revolution, but with love.

### Love Is Perfection

“Wesley’s definition of *perfection* is as yet unimproved and still carries the essence of what is meant by the term in holiness circles. . . . At the end of *A Plain Account*, Wesley sums up his teaching in these words: ‘By perfection, I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.’ He was careful to guard against a Pharisaic or legalistic view of perfection. . . . For Wesley, as for Scripture, Christian perfection means *perfect love*. This is the sense in which it has been understood by the clearest exponents of the teaching through the centuries. . . . In his sermon on Christian perfection, Wesley, therefore, says, ‘It [perfect love] is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing.’”<sup>1</sup>

### Perfection Negatively

The way we see perfection as a negative would have frightened the ancient church fathers. The Gospel is clear in its call (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15, 16). They had no intention of a cold adherence to rules or utter freedom from temptation. Those tempted less were regarded as those God knew could stand little.

Notice the context of the Matthew 5 text: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the

publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (vv. 44–48).

The perfection that will be patterned after the Father is perfection of love. That is the context of this passage. When verse 48 says, "Be ye therefore . . ." the reference is to the preceding four verses where Jesus described an amazing quality of love—a love that will love those who hate us. It is in love, an amazing love such as this, that Jesus calls us to the perfection of the Father. Perfection was and is loving God with all the heart.

The Great Commandment shows us the centrality of love: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (22:36–40).

Notice the priority of love in Colossians 3:14: "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Paul says love is so vital that it is primary; it is the uniting principle in perfectness. If one hopes to be perfect, love is the glue that holds it all together.

Notice the priority of love in 1 Timothy 1:5–7: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Note that the small word "end" is quite significant. It is the root from which the word "perfect" comes. We could say, "Now the perfection of the commandment is. . . ." The target, the goal, and the final destination where the commandment wants to carry us all is love.

Notice the priority of love in 1 Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." For the second time, we see love connected with the phrase, "above all things." If that really means what it is saying, you could place any other religious qualification beside

love, and love would take precedence every time. Think about that. Then, it teaches us that love will cover a multitude of sins. Try to find anything outside of Christ in the Bible that will deal with sin, anything. Yet Peter says love has a profound effect even with sin.

Notice the priority of love all through the New Testament. First John 4:7–19 teaches quite a bit about this love. For instance, it says that if we love, we are born of God, and if we don't, we don't know Him. Apparently, John thought that love was the supreme indication of whether a person was a Christian or not. Later, he tells us that the person who dwells in love is really dwelling in God. And he caps it off by revealing that God is love. Is it any wonder that love means holiness, perfection, and maturity?

We must not forget that John 13:34, 35 teaches us that the most effective world-winning evangelism and mission strategy is love. Romans 13:8 says we ought to have only one debt to any man—to love him. Galatians 5:14 simplifies things greatly when Paul teaches us that all the law is fulfilled in one word, love.

***"This love perfection did not seem repulsive.*** It was God's call (Matthew 5:48; Luke 10:27). . . . The ancient church understood that fear was the hindrance of love, which blocked perfection of which 1 John 4:17, 18 speaks. Love casts out fear. . . . Perfection is not

a compulsive person, nitpicking, judging others, or a refusal to accept our sinfulness as fallen. Love expressed in humility was a way of seeing others as equally important as ourselves (Philippians 2:1–7). Humility was the path to love, and love, the key to all virtue.

***"Love defeats legalism's self-righteousness.*** Love identifies in compassion and works to heal rather than judging for criticism. Love is not duty or guilt, but a delight in God's love and responding by loving others.

***"We gain greater freedom over appetites and emotions as we grow in love for God.*** We are most human when we are fulfilling the design God had for us at creation—loving Him. So "I'm only human" is an error; we should say, "I'm fallen, but God can restore my humanity."

***"We grow closer to God as we love others.*** If God is the center of the circle and each radius is a person, we move toward God as we all go closer to one another. This is an extension of the great commandment, which says to love your neighbor as yourself.

***"Motivation reveals much.*** First, people come to God out of fear, then they seek God for reward; finally, they come to God for the relationship of love in His communion. This is the highest, most mature, perfect worship.

***"Love as emotion is short-term at best.*** Love as disposition or commitment usually takes over in marriage and becomes a way of life. It takes choosing love over other options repeatedly, and it takes practicing continually.

***"Temperament and disposition are two ways of seeing this love.*** Temperament is immature and will control, but in maturity the chosen and cultivated attitude of the heart will take control. Love, then, is the goal we are practicing to practice more.

***"Covet command becomes the opposite of this perfection.*** In many ways, the last command is the ultimate. It is the most internal. It directly relates to our love for God. If we are loving (coveting) with our affection, it also means our affections are not totally given to God. Covet becomes the indicator in the negative of our affections."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>William M. Greathouse, *From the Apostles to Wesley: Christian Perfection in Historical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup>Roberta Bondi, *To Love as God Loves* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987).

*Note:* This section is an adaptation taken from *Foundations: Spiritual Formation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1997), pp. 61–65.

## The Call of Holiness

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Peter quoted Leviticus 11:44: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15).

### The Call to Separation From Sin

The call we hear from Jesus and Peter is most familiar since it has been the emphasis of Christian history in the last two centuries. This biblical theme is identified by passages such as 2 Corinthians 6:17: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” The word holy is defined as follows, “hagios, hag’-ee-os; from hagos (an awful thing); sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremoniously consecrated): (most) holy (one, thing), saint.”<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, there is the element of absence of sin or any defilement in this definition. But more prominently, the idea of separation from sin came from the Old Testament background of the temple, sacrifices, and the tabernacle. There, priests could not touch things unclean, sacrifices had to be clean without defilement, and no unclean thing could come into holy areas.

Mistakenly, the idea arose that righteousness could be defiled by proximity to sin. In “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21), the thought is present that evil might overcome good. The implication from an Old Testament mindset would be to not allow evil to touch or defile oneself. In New Testament days, this is seen in the Qumran community, which separated itself from society to be the pure and holy people of God. The second half of this verse was overlooked as concern for evil overcoming good became preeminent.

The life of Jesus clarifies this extreme view of holiness as separation from sin. Though Jesus was without sin, He was regularly seen through His life with sinners. As a matter of fact, this disturbed the

religious leaders of His day. They would not allow their reputations to be sullied by eating or socializing with sinners, yet Jesus did. He demonstrated that holiness is separation from sin within the heart rather than external rituals or observances of cleanliness and purity.

### **The Call to Consecration to God**

From a more positive perspective, holiness is the call to complete consecration to God. This is also seen in the Old Testament structure of Israel's worship. The Levitical priesthood was to be totally given to the Lord and the work of the temple. They did not own land or work to provide for themselves. Their full devotion was to be given to the labor of the worship of God (Leviticus 21:6; Numbers 8:16).

The Nazarites mentioned in the Old Testament were another illustration of this type of consecration (Numbers 6:2). This family committed themselves to a vow unto the Lord never to drink wine or any strong drink and never to participate with unclean things. They were fully consecrated to the Lord. In a similar way, the entire nation of Israel was consecrated to God. In God's eyes, they were His chosen people. "For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God" (2 Samuel 7:24).

God redeemed Israel with the purpose that they would be the nation in all the earth that belonged to Him.

Now, in the New Testament, the call of holiness speaks this truth of consecration to all believers. Perhaps, 1 Peter 2:9 says it most profoundly: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Believers are called to be fully devoted and loyal to God in holiness. We are to be holy vessels for His use and glory alone. We are His people whom He desires to be completely given only to His will. One scholar wrote that the word "peculiar," used above, could be described as a circle that has only one dot right in the center. God's people are the dot in the center of His attention, redeemed to be His alone.

## **Hinderances to Personal Piety**

### *Selfish Attitude Toward Sin; Egocentricism*

Sin is often seen as what stops us from succeeding rather than our offensive act against God in violation of His will, grieving Him. God is more interested in obedient believers than successful ones. The goal must be to weep with God over sins against Him and also that believers live to make God a success by glorifying Him, not themselves.

### *Which Sins Are Serious?*

Most believers have their sin categories that are emphasized. Most overlook or ignore the list of more inward sins such as Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." And most forget to judge themselves for these before condemning others. In comparison to the majesty and holiness of God, all fault and failing is sin and needs His atoning power. In His heart, all sin is grievous, not just our pet few.

### *Misunderstanding Faith*

Often, believers think faith is believing with no action on their own. Popular conceptions of faith totally focus on the mental exercise of intellectual assent to propositional statements. Accompanying this is a feeling that all effort is of the flesh and cannot benefit the spirit.

Read Luther's words on faith: "[Faith] is a living, well-founded confidence in the grace of God. . . . [It] makes its possessor joyful, bold, and full of warm affection toward God. . . . Such a man becomes without constraint willing to do good to all."<sup>2</sup>

"What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness. . . . They would be saved by Christ and yet be out of Christ in a fleshly state. . . . They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment."<sup>3</sup>

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (v. 14).

“. . . without [holiness] . . . no man shall see the Lord” (12:14).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:3, 4).

---

<sup>1</sup>James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Regal, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther quoted by Harry Emerson Fosdick, ed., *Great Voices of the Reformation* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 1954), pp. 121, 122.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Marshall quoted by A. W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1955), p. 29.

*Note:* This section is an adaptation taken from *Foundations: Spiritual Formation* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1997), pp. 27–29.

## The Holiness Movement

“Pentecostalism was born in the cradle of the Holiness Movement of the nineteenth century. The Holiness Movement actually traces its roots to John Wesley in the eighteenth century, who taught sort of a two-tiered salvation. The first tier was conversion or justification in which one is forgiven and freed from past sins. The second tier was ‘entire sanctification,’ which liberated one from their fallen nature, or at least the tendency toward sin. Revivalists in the early 1800s such as Asa Mahan (President of Oberlin College) and Evangelist Charles Finney advanced Wesley’s theology. They taught ‘that sinners had the natural ability to believe and that evangelistic methods could overcome their “moral” inability through the persuasive power of the Gospel. Finney and Mahan applied this same understanding to the Christian’s growth toward spiritual maturity. . . . To be sanctified, they insisted, required only the same kind of simple, instantaneous faith one exercised to be converted.’<sup>1</sup>

“. . . Contributing to the spread of this ‘Holiness’ doctrine were the popular camp meeting revivals of the first-half of the 1800s, the ministry of Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) (who taught that sanctification could be reached instantaneously by an act of faith), and the ‘Prayer Revival’ of 1857–1858 (sometimes called the Third Great Awakening). There was also much unrest in Methodist circles as many felt the denomination had lost its fervor. The Wesleyan Methodist (in 1843) and the Free Methodist (in 1860) left the denomination to form the first Holiness denominations. Until the 1890s, the Holiness Movement was largely a Methodist phenomenon, but as the Methodists settled more into mainstream Christianity, tensions escalated into a schism, which resulted in new, non-Methodist, Holiness denominations. These included the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana (1880), Church of the Nazarene (1908), and Pilgrim Holiness Church (1897).”<sup>2</sup>

As an example, late in the nineteenth century (1897), Quaker Seth Cook Rees and Methodist Martin Wells Knapp founded what would become the Pilgrim Holiness Church at God’s Bible School

in Cincinnati. The resulting movement (later a denomination) was committed from the beginning to both personal and social holiness. Students at God's Bible School "worked the streets" of downtown Cincinnati, feeding the poor and caring for the homeless in mission venues as they prepared to travel to the impoverished nations of the world in missionary work or stay at home and plant "storefront churches" accessible to the poor. Pilgrim churches were commonly planted "across the railroad tracks" in the poorest sections of town or in storefront missions, which could cater to the poor.

The influence of Holiness Second Blessing Teaching was wide. By the end of the nineteenth century, entire sanctification, narrowly defined as a second crisis experience subsequent to regeneration, accompanied by external manifestations and heightened morality and described as a personal Pentecost, came to be identified as the central truth of the Bible.

Part of the reason the Holiness Movement came to this conclusion was the tremendous growth and influence it experienced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The wide appeal of Palmer's "altar theology," the international and trans-denominational spread of the Holiness doctrine, and the success of the National Camp Meeting Association confirmed the view that entire sanctification was the "crowning experience of the Christian life."

The Holiness Movement spread through revivals emphasizing a deepening experience with God-called holiness or sanctification. Heart purity was a central theme. During this period of time, many small churches developed through revivals and the emphasis of sanctification (taught by John Wesley but not emphasized by many Methodists of that day). As many as 25 or 30 small denominations were formed and eventually merged with other groups to enlarge the church. The church was strong in missionary and revival emphasis.

"The Holiness adherents saw themselves as the true descendents of the Wesleys and practiced strict moral ethics, abstinence from worldly pleasures and amusements, and a strong belief in entire sanctification (also known as the 'second blessing' and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit). More importantly, 'Holiness teaching offered nineteenth century evangelicals a means of overcoming their sectarian

conflicts. Doctrine might divide, but the experience of a pure heart would unite all true believers against the threats posed by religious formalism, atheism, and Roman Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> This Holiness emphasis would continue to be spread throughout the nineteenth century by individuals and groups as diverse as the Salvation Army, Quakers, D. L. Moody, Hannah Whitall Smith, the Y.M.C.A., the Keswick Movement, and Oswald Chambers. . . .

“Today the Holiness Movement lives on through the various Holiness denominations, the continued efforts of both the English and American Keswick Conferences, and through the writings of Hannah Whitall Smith, Lettie Cowman (*Streams in the Desert*), Oswald Chambers (*My Utmost for His Highest*), and others.”<sup>4</sup> But more than this, the movement lives on through the next generation of Holiness that we call Pentecostalism.

“. . . Charles Parham (Father of the Pentecostal Movement) would take the Holiness teachings to another level. He liked the idea of a super-level spirituality brought about by a crisis experience (i.e., Spirit Baptism), but he also believed that Spirit Baptism should be accompanied by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, especially tongues. In 1901, Parham and a handful of followers claimed to experience tongues as an evidence of their baptism. This would mark the birth of the Pentecostal Movement, which would combine Holiness theology with supernatural signs of the Spirit. Only a few years later, a student of Parham, William J. Seymour, led what would be called the Azusa Street Revival (1906–1909), which elevated manifestations of the Holy Spirit to such a level . . . that Pentecostal practice and Holiness theology would spread throughout the world in the decades that followed.”<sup>5</sup>

So we see that this small group in the mountains of North Carolina was moving under the impetus of something far greater than themselves. In their day, God was at work fueling the fires of a worldwide shift. The preparations of the Holiness Movement laid the foundations for the Pentecostal Movement, which powers the engine of today's world-sweeping mission wave, building the Kingdom of God in every corner of the globe.

<sup>1</sup>*Christian History and Biography*, Issue 82, "The Cleansing Wave," p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Gary Gilley, "The Holiness Movement," <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/19-charismatics/29-the-holiness-movement>.

<sup>3</sup>*Christian History and Biography*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>Gilley.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

*Note:* This section is an adaptation of an article titled "The Holiness Movement," written by Garry Gilley, <http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/19-charismatics/29-the-holiness-movement>.