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GODLINESS

## CHAPTER 11: HOLINESS – I

I THINK it must be self-evident to every one present that it is the most important question that can possibly occupy the mind of man—how much like God we can be, how near to God we can come on earth preparatory to our being perfectly like Him, and living, as it were, in His very heart for ever and ever in Heaven. Anyone who has any measure of the Spirit of God must perceive that this is the most important question on which we can concentrate our thoughts; and the mystery of mysteries to me is, how anyone, with any measure of the Spirit of God, can help looking at this blessing of Holiness, and saying, 'Well, even if it does seem too great for attainment on earth, it is very beautiful and very blessed. I wish I could attain it.' That, it seems to me, must be the attitude of every person who has the Spirit of God—that he should hunger and thirst after it, and feel that he shall never be satisfied till he wakes up in the lovely likeness of his Saviour. And yet, alas! we do not find it so. In a great many instances, the very first thing professing Christians do is to resist and reject this doctrine of Holiness as if it were the most foul thing on earth.

I heard of a gentleman saying, a few days ago—a leader in one circle of religion—that for anybody to talk about being holy, showed that they knew nothing of themselves and nothing of Jesus Christ. I said, 'Oh, my God! it has come to something if Holiness and Jesus Christ are at the antipodes of each other. I thought He was the centre and fountain of Holiness. I thought it was in Him only we could get any Holiness, and through Him that Holiness could be wrought in us.' But this poor man thought this idea to be absurd.

May God speak for Himself! Ever since I heard that sentiment I have been crying from the depths of my soul, 'Lord, speak for Thyself; powerfully work on the hearts of Thy people and awake them. Take the veil from their eyes, and show them what Thy purpose in Christ Jesus concerning them is. Do not let them be bewildered and miss the mark; do not leave them, but, Lord, reveal it in their hearts.' There is no other way by which it can be revealed, and, if you will let Him, He will reveal it in your heart this morning.

It occurred to me that I might say a word or two on what my husband said about infirmities, because I am so continually meeting people who will make infirmities sins. They insist upon it that the requirements of the Adamic law have never been abated; that we are not under the evangelical law of love, or the law of Christ, as the Apostle puts it, but that we are still under the Adamic law, and that



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these imperfections and infirmities, to which my husband has referred, are sins. I wonder that such people do not think of a certain passage, which must for ever explode such a theory, where the Apostle says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." If these infirmities had been sins, we should have the outrageous anomaly of an Apostle of Jesus Christ glorying in his sins! You see, his infirmities were only those defects of mind and body which were capable of being overcome and overruled by grace to the glory of Christ and to the furtherance of His kingdom.

I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me—that, in consequence of these very infirmities, the power of Christ shall so rest upon me as to lift me above them, make me independent of them, master of them, so that, through these very infirmities, I shall more glorify His strength and grace than if I were a perfect man in mind and body. In another place he says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." Some people think this was sin; but surely the words, "messenger of Satan," show that this thorn was no act or disposition of Paul's, but some external temptation or affliction inflicted by Satan. Besides, the Divine assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee," ought to forbid the idea of sin. Paul sought the Lord thrice to have this thorn removed; surely, if it had been sin, the Lord would have been as anxious to have it removed as His servant was! This thorn was, doubtless, some physical trial—as the words, "in the flesh" indicate—some tribulation or sorrow, through the patient endurance of which the strength of Christ could be magnified in Paul's weakness—one of those things which he could bear "through Christ, who strengthened him."

But mark, this was a Divinely-permitted discipline to prevent Paul from falling into sin; quite a different thing to sin itself. "God tempteth no man with evil." The Lord sent this to Paul for the purpose, not of making him humble, for he was humbled before, but of keeping him humble. And does He not send something to us all? Do we not need trials and tribulations in the flesh in order to keep us humble? But is this evidence, that because we require these things to keep us humble, therefore pride is dwelling in us and reigning over us? It is an evidence just to the contrary.

Oh, that people, in their enquiries about this blessing of Holiness, would keep this one thing before their minds, that it is BEING SAVED FROM SIN!—sin in act, in purpose, in thought!

I have a beautiful letter, received a short time ago from a young lady who wrote me soon after my



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former services in the West End. She told me that she had been the bond-slave, I think, for four or five years, of a certain besetting sin, and her first letter was the very utterance of despair. She had struggled and wrestled and prayed, and tried to overcome the sin that had been reigning over her. Now and then she would get the victory, and then down she went again, and she said, 'It is such a subtle thing, connected with my thoughts and imagination, so that I do not think I ever can be saved.' I answered the letter, and tried to encourage her faith and hope in Jesus Christ. I showed her how dishonouring this unbelief was, and that, if she would only trust Him to come in and reign in her heart, He could purify and cleanse the very thoughts and imagination. She made a little advance, and wrote me another letter. I wrote her again, and encouraged her to trust further. She said she could not come so far as to think that He could purify her thoughts. She had got as far as to believe that He could save her from putting them into practice, but she could not believe that He could purify them. I wrote her back once more, and tried, the Lord helping me, to show her how Jesus, by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, could purify the very thoughts of our hearts, and, thank God, she did go another step. I have had two letters from her since. She said in the first of them, "I rejoice with trembling, for fear it should be only temporary, but I have trusted Him to purify the source, and I must say HE HAS DONE IT, and, instead of thinking these thoughts, I have holy thoughts, and if Satan presents anything to my mind, it is so repulsive to me that I cannot tell you the grief and horror with which it fills me." I wrote her again, encouraging her, and I got another letter, in which she said, "It is a fact that He has cleansed the thoughts of my heart, and now I am conscious that my thoughts are pleasing to Him, that He has saved me from this sin which has been the trouble and torment of my life for all these years gone by."

Now, what I want to say to you is, that what He can do for one He can do for another. If I am wrong here, I give up the whole question. I am perfectly mistaken in the purpose and aim and command of the Gospel Dispensation, if God does not want His people to be pure. Not to count themselves pure when they ARE NOT. Oh, no! We are told over and over again that God wants His people to be pure, and THAT PURITY IN THEIR HEARTS IS THE VERY CENTRAL IDEA AND END AND PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST; if it is not so, I give up the whole question—I am utterly deceived.

In justification of this I have selected, this morning, two or three texts which seem to put it all in one; summing-up texts, so to speak. I will take first, as a specimen, what my husband has been trying to enforce: "The will of God is your sanctification." There is, however, a sense, and an important sense, in which sanctification must be the will of man. It must be my will too, and if it is not my will, the Divine will can never be accomplished in me. I must will to be sanctified, as God is willing that I



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should be sanctified. There are as many, and more, exhortations in the Bible to sanctify yourselves, than there are promises of God to sanctify you.

The next text is James iv. 8: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." This was to backsliders, to people who had been professing to believe, but who had gone back under the dominion of their fleshly appetites and passions. There are two or three other texts where we seem to get the whole matter summed up, as, for instance, "He gave Himself for us [that is for us Christians, the whole Church of God] that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." That is, purify us. And then 1 Timothy 1:5, shows God's purpose and aim in the whole method of redemption. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"—cleansed and kept clean, for if it had been cleaned and become dirty again, it would not be a good but a bad conscience. And again in the verse which my husband has already quoted, 1 John 3:3, "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Now, I say these are summing-up texts, and there are numbers of others to the same effect, to show that the whole end and purpose of redemption is this—that He will restore us to purity; that He will bring us back to righteousness; that He will purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God—not only purge you from the past, but keep you purged to serve the LIVING GOD; that it shall be done by the application of the blood to the conscience, and then it shall be maintained by the power of the Holy Ghost keeping us in a state of purity and obedience to righteousness.

Now, I say, if this be not the central idea of Christianity, I do not understand it. If God cannot do this for me—if Jesus Christ cannot do this for me, what is my advantage at all by His coming?

I was thinking, yesterday, what a great deal more there is in these epistles directed to the individual Christian to be this, that, and the other, and to do this, that, and the other, than there is about what God will do for him after all! This is not an objective Christianity—this is not a sitting down and sentimentalising and thinking of Christ in the Heavens, in these epistles; it brings Him down, to all intents and purposes, INTO OUR HEARTS AND LIVES HERE, and it is one of the continual exhortations, BE ye this, and Do ye this and the other.

These epistles represent a real, practical transformation to be accomplished IN US, and this is the only thing that will do to die with. If it is not accomplished in you, I tell you, you will not be able to die



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in peace. You will want to be cleansed, as my dear husband told you, before you can venture into the presence of the King of Kings. You will want a sense of beautiful, moral rectitude and righteousness spreading over your whole nature, which will enable you to look up into the face of God, and say, 'Yes, I love Thee, I know Thee, and Thou knowest me, and lovest me, and we are one. I love the things Thou lovest, and desire the things Thou desirest. We are of one spirit, "joined unto the Lord." You will want that, and nothing less will do to die with. And why not have it? Will you have it? Why not let God work it in us? Will you try it? People are constantly saying, "They long for it, and they wish they could get it." Will you let God do it? Will you put away the depths of unbelief which are at the bottom of all your difficulty? People really do not believe that God can do it for them, and that is at the bottom of their difficulties. But He can do it, and He promises to do it. Will you go down, and say, "Be it unto me according to Thy Word?"

"BORN A SAVIOUR" LUKE 2:11

Jesus, a Saviour born, Without: Without the inn, refused with scorn. Cast out: Cast out for me, my Saviour King Cast out to bring this lost one in.

Jesus a Saviour born, A man: A man of sorrows, smitten, torn By stripes: By stripes, O Lord, my soul is healed, By stripes, Thy stripes, my pardon sealed.

Jesus, a Saviour born, The Lamb: The Lamb of God hath bled and borne My sins: My sins the Sacrifice did slay, My sins the Lamb doth take away.

Jesus, a Saviour born To save: To save at night, at noon, at morn. To keep: To keep from sin, from doubt, from fear; To keep, for lo! the Keeper's here.

Jesus, a Saviour born, A King: A King! Exalt His glorious horn, and sing: O sing, ye heavens! He burst His grave, And sing, O earth! He lives to save.

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