



Heart Talks on Holiness

Chapter 2 – Holiness: What It Is Not, And What It Is

First of all, Holiness is not necessarily a state in which there is perpetual rapturous joy. Isaiah liii. 3 tells us that Jesus was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' and Paul tells us of himself that he had continual sorrow and great heaviness because of the rejection of Jesus by his kinsmen after the flesh. Joy is the normal state of a holy man, but it may be mingled with sorrow and grief and perplexities and heaviness on account of manifold temptations. The low water mark, however, in the experience of a holy person is one of perfect peace – the high water mark is up in the third heaven somewhere; however, this third heaven experience is not likely to be constantly maintained. Jesus and the disciples had to come down off the Mount of Transfiguration and go to casting out devils, and Paul returned from the third heaven to be buffeted of Satan, and stoned and whipped, and imprisoned of men.

II. Holiness is not a state of freedom from temptation. This is a world of trial, and conflict with principalities and powers, darkneses and terrible evils, and the holy soul who is in the forefront of the conflict may expect the fiercest assaults of the devil, and the heaviest and most perplexing and prolonged temptations. Our Blessed Lord was tried and tempted for forty days and forty nights of the devil, and the servant must not be surprised if he is as his Master.

Paul tells us that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and that He is able to succor us when we are tempted. It is no sin to be tempted; in fact, the Apostle James tells us to rejoice when we are subjected to all manner of temptations for the resulting trial of our faith will produce in us strength and force of holy character, so that we shall be lacking in nothing (Jas. i. 2-4).

III. Holiness is not a state of freedom from infirmities. It does not produce a perfect head, but rather a perfect heart! The saints have always been compassed about with infirmities that have proved a source of great trial, but when patiently endured for His dear sake have also proved a source of great blessing. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, an infirmity, a messenger of Satan to buffet



him. Possibly it was weak eyes, for he was once stoned and dragged out of the city and left for dead, and in writing to the Galatians, he tells them they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him had it been possible. Or it may have been a stammering tongue, for he tells us he was accounted rude of speech. Anyway, it was an infirmity which he longed to be rid of; doubtless feeling that it interfered with his usefulness, and three times he prayed to the Lord for deliverance, but instead of getting the prayed-for deliverance, the Lord said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Then Paul cried out, 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong' (2 Cor. xii. 9-10)

In the Epistle to the Hebrew iv, 15 we are told that Jesus was 'touched of our infirmities.' We may be faulty in memory, in judgment, in understanding; we may have manifold infirmities of body and mind; but God looks upon the purity of the heart, the singleness of the eye, and the loyalty of our affection, and if He does not find us faulty there, He counts us perfect men. It is not in the mere natural perfection that the power and glory of God are manifested, but rather in goodness and purity and patience and love and meekness and long-suffering shining forth through infirmities of flesh and imperfections of mind.

IV. Holiness is not a state of freedom from affliction. The saints of all ages have been chosen 'in the furnace of affliction' (Isa. xlviii. 10). Job and Jeremiah and Daniel and Paul and the mighty army of martyrs have, and shall always, come up through great tribulations. It is not God's purpose to take us to heaven on flowery beds of ease, clothe us in purple and fine linen, and keep a sugar plum in our mouths all the time. That would not develop strength of character, nor cultivate simplicity and purity of heart: nor in that case could we really know Jesus, and the fellowship of His sufferings. It is in the furnace of fire, the lion's den, and the dungeon cell that He most freely reveals Himself to His people.



Other things being equal, the holy man is less liable to afflictions than the sinner. He does not run into the same excesses that the sinner does; he is free from the pride, the temper, the jealousies, the vaulting ambitions, and selfishness, that plunge so many sinners into terrible affliction and ruin; and yet he must not presume that he will get through the world without heavy trials, sore temptations and afflictions. Job was a perfect man, but he lost all his property and his children, and, in a day was made a childless pauper; but he proved his perfection by giving God glory. Then when his wife bade him curse God and die, he said unto her, 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job ii. 10). And when his three friends were undermining his faith, he looked up from off his ash heap, and out of his awful sorrow and desolation, and fierce pain, and cried out, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ' (Job x iii. 15).

Joseph is one of the few men in the Bible against whom nothing is recorded, but like Daniel his very holiness and righteousness led to the terrible trials he endured in Egypt. And so it may be, and is, with the saints to-day. But while we may be afflicted, yet we can comfort ourselves with David's assurance, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all' (Ps. xxxiv. 19). A friend of mine said he would rather have a thousand afflictions and be delivered out of them all, than to have half a dozen and get stuck in the midst of them.

V. Holiness is not a state in which there is no further development. When the heart is purified it develops more rapidly than ever before. Spiritual development comes through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart, and the holy soul is in a condition to receive such revelations constantly, and since the finite can never exhaust the infinite, these revelations will continue for ever and prove an increasing and never-ending source of development. It would be as wise to say that a child afflicted with rickets would grow no more when its blood was purified; or that corn would grow no more when the weeds were destroyed, as to say that a soul will cease to grow in grace when it is made holy.

VI. Holiness is not a state from which we cannot fall. Paul tells us that we stand by faith (Rom. xi.



16-22), and he says, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' (I Cor. x. 12). It is an unscriptural and dangerous doctrine that there is any state of grace in this world from which we cannot fall. Probation does not end the moment we believe on Jesus, but rather the moment we quit the body. It is only those who endure to the end who shall be saved. While here, we are in the enemy's country, and must watch and pray and daily examine ourselves, and keep ourselves in the love of God, lest we fall from His grace and make shipwreck of our faith. But while we may fall, thank God holiness is a state from which we need not fall, in fact it is a state which Paul calls, 'this grace wherein we stand' (Rom. V.2).

Some have asked the question, 'How can a holy soul be tempted or how can it fall?' I will ask the question, how could the angels fall? And how could Adam, just fresh from the hands of his Maker in whose image he was made, fall? And I will ask the more startling question still, how could Jesus, the blessed incarnate himself be tempted? We have our five senses and various bodily appetites, none of which are in themselves sinful, but each of which may become an avenue by which the holy soul may be solicited to evil. Each must be regulated by the word of God and dominated by the love of Jesus, if we wish to keep a holy heart, and 'stand perfect and complete in all the will of God' (Col. iv. 12).

Finally holiness is a state of conformity to the divine nature. God is love and there is a sense in which a holy man can be said to be love. He is like God, not in God's natural perfection of power and wisdom and knowledge and omnipresence, but in patience, humility, self-control, purity of heart and love. As the drop out of the ocean is like the ocean not in its bigness but in its essence so is the holy soul like God. As the branch is like the vine, not in its self-sufficiency, but in its nature its sap, its fruitfulness, its beauty, so is he that is holy like God.

This unspeakable blessing is provided for us by our compassionate Heavenly Father through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and is received through a complete renunciation of all sin, an uttermost consecration to all the known will of God, importunate prayer, and child-like faith. Fifteen years ago I obtained this crowning blessing of the gospel through the conscious



incoming of the Holy Spirit when I believed, after weeks of earnest seeking. Bless God! He still abides with me and my peace and joy increase and abound. Many have been my afflictions, and fierce and perplexing and prolonged have been my temptations, but with a daredevil faith I have pressed on, claiming victory through the Blood, testifying to what I claimed by faith, and proving day by day this grace to be sufficient while the path shines more and more unto the perfect day. Glory be to God for ever!