

Fourfold Challenge to Holiness

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon challenges believers to embrace holiness through faith in Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 32:23

Scripture: Leviticus 11:44, Matthew 6:33, Romans 7:24, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of holiness in the lives of believers. He references Ephesians 1:4, which states that believers are chosen in Christ to be holy. He also discusses the resistance to holiness, using Romans 7:24 to highlight the struggle that believers face in overcoming sin. The speaker then points to 1 Corinthians 1:30, which describes Christ as the source of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He concludes by expressing his longing for a Holy Spirit revival in the church, as he believes that this is the only alternative to the ruin of Western civilization or the imminent return of Christ.

Transcript

As we meet together here in this lovely evening at Keswick, perhaps it's hard for us to realize that we live in such tremendously challenging days. I believe that there are only three alternatives that confront this generation. The first of them, the utter ruin of western civilization, as we know it.

The second of them, the immediate, or certainly imminent, return of the Lord Jesus Christ to take his people home. The third of them, a mighty Holy Ghost revival in the church. While my heart longs to see my Savior face to face, I cannot escape the personal conviction that to meet him and have to give an account of stewardship in the light of spiritual condition today would make me desperately ashamed.

I long that even yet in these last days there may be a mighty outpouring of God the Holy Spirit, a great in-gathering of precious souls worthy of our Master's name, something that would cause his heart to rejoin, something that would make his church again to sing with joy. Over 80 years ago this convention was inaugurated for the purpose of considering New Testament holiness of life. New Testament holiness of life and spiritual revival are synonymous terms.

You can't have one without the other. Every one of us in this great concourse this evening, and all who listen by landline, may tonight, if they're prepared to face God, to face him on his terms, they may stand in

a circle and put themselves in that circle and say, O Lord, for Jesus' sake, revive everything in this circle. This must begin with you and with me.

With this in mind, therefore, my dear friend, I would like to present to you tonight four verses of scripture for your thinking, which I trust may in some measure sum up what has been said and declared through various means and various servants of God during the days of this past week. Ephesians 1-4, chosen in him that we should be holy, the responsibility of holiness. Romans 7-24, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? The resistance to holiness.

1 Corinthians 1-30, Christ Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The reception of holiness. And Ephesians 5-18, be being filled with the Spirit.

The realization of holiness. Let us consider briefly this verse in Ephesians 1-4, chosen in him that we might be holy. About a year ago, perhaps a little more than that now, I was sharing in a conference in New York with my very dear friend, and I believe yours also, Stephen Alford.

And may I in passing say that I do trust that many of you keep our beloved brother Stephen upon your hearts for prayer, as he stands in that great metropolis of the United States, indeed a prophet in a wilderness. In sharing this conference together, he spoke to quite a large group of ministers on holiness of life. At the end of the meeting, one of those ministers came up to him and said, thank you for your message, but I'm sorry, that is not my line.

Not my line. Is Keswick a line? Is the teaching of this convention a kind of hobby? Is it remote from reality? Is it something that, well, it's an option if we like it? I would say to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the central necessity of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. I do not find in the New Testament that holiness is an option.

Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord. Romans 8, 29, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. Hebrews 12, 14, holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

The only and the unalterable evidence of a true experience of the new birth is a holy life. Now for this, each one of us is responsible before God. There is a great danger and peril that we come to conventions and get used to them.

We enjoy the crowd, we like the singing, we love meeting people, and we like listening to sermons and taking them down in note. But how many of us are apt to do all this and never take a further step in faith and in obedience? We talk about faith, we sing about faith, we discuss the subject of faith, but we urgently need to take a step of faith to make what is theologically true when we are born again, experimentally true every moment of our life. Our churches, by and large, in many areas, are filled with people who would be equally shocked to see Christianity practiced as they would be to see it doubted.

And in many such fellowships, nobody would know if the Holy Spirit departed. It wouldn't make any difference. And in this connection, I believe there are two extremes in our thinking about this subject, which are equally dangerous and need to be avoided.

I will illustrate them by something that took place in my own life just a little while ago. Soon after coming to Edinburgh, the church at Charlotte Chapel bought for us a lovely new home. The home is not new, it's about 60 or 70 years old, and it's made of strong, rugged, Edinburgh stone.

Stand up, as long as anything will stand up. Recognizing that we had been 10 years in an extremely hot climate, the deacon's court very generously said, now we think you must keep warm, so we must put in central heat. After several months, this major surgery upon quite an old house was completed.

All the pipes were in, and the radiators were there, and everything looking very beautiful and very lovely, such a lovely furnace, and a great big oil tank. And the day came for this to be tested. So I went to the house to watch the engineer test it, and no sooner he started, than the pump broke down.

This of course had to be remedied, and there was a time, quite a while, when it was quite chilly in May, when we had everything except the heat. Eventually this problem was rectified, the pump was made to work, and the heat went on. One afternoon, when I was down at Charlotte Chapel, my wife rang me up on the phone and said, are you likely to be coming home soon? I said, well I hadn't thought of it just now, but why? Well she said, we're so hot in here that we're almost overcome.

Well I couldn't get home very quickly, but I went home that evening, and all I could say to you, my dear friend, without exaggeration, is that tropical Africa would have been like the Arctic Ocean. Everybody was perspiring. The radiators were blistering, my wife and daughter were going around sighing, and the house was really preposterously hot.

Well this time the thermostat had failed to operate. On the first occasion there was equipment but no heat. On the second occasion there was heat but no control.

And these two opposite extremes are extremely dangerous when we think of this subject. It is possible to have all the equipment but no fire. It is possible to have all the fire, but sometimes for a very strange fire, and it isn't controlled.

There are many Christians today who would take the position that we have everything that we can expect from God from the moment of our conversion. And if we seek for more than we have in Christ at the moment of our new birth, we may very well be led off into some theological bypass of unspiritual fanaticism. And become extreme.

Personally all I can say to such is this, that I have a hungry heart tonight for all that God has for me. And if there is something more for me in the world than that which by his grace I already have, then I'm going to press my claim for it. And I'm going to trust him that as I press in for his best, he'll keep me from the counterfeit.

After all, the word of God promises that he satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry with goodness. Not madness, but goodness. This is one position I believe to be avoided at all costs.

It leads to spiritual stagnation. It leads to carnal infancy of Christian experience and a failure to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And though such people would say, I believe in the Holy Spirit, this is merely the statement of a creed rather than a transforming dynamic experience of life.

But then there is the opposite extreme, which makes extravagant claim to an experience of holiness completely contradicted by everyday life. Some years ago, I remember in the south of England, a young man came up to me after an evening service at which I'd been preaching, and he dashed up to me with his face radiant and almost hugged me and said, Hallelujah, brother. Now, I reacted in a peculiar way to that.

I retreated a yard or two and said, Hallelujah, and hoped it was all right. And then he said to me, I want you to know that two years ago I was saved, and one year ago I was sanctified, and now I'm completely free from sin. And I said, my dear old boy, you've got further in two years than I've got in twenty-five.

And if I understand my Bible all right, you've got further in two years than Paul got in a lifetime. So the apostle Paul, soon after his conversion, said of himself, I am the least of the apostles. Later on, I am less than the least of all the saints.

And later on still, I am the chief of sinners. Paradoxical as it may seem, a growth in New Testament holiness is accompanied by a growth in the sense of one's utter, complete corruption. These are two extremes, I believe, therefore, that we need to avoid.

And yet, nevertheless, the whole book, the Word of God, the blood of Jesus, an empty tomb, an ascended Lord, cry out to the church, be ye holy, for I am holy. And I long that somehow we might get not only into our hymn, hymnody, but into our experience, the words of Charles Wesley, when he sang, O that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow, burn up the draught of base desire, and make the mountain flow. O thou who at Pentecost did fall, do thou my sins consume.

Holy ghost on thee I call, spirit of burning, come, that's a man with a longing heart. Our responsibility. Secondly, the resistance to holiness.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? There is not one of us who, having faith, the challenge to holy living, has then faced the utter inability in the flesh to achieve what God commands. Like water, human nature can never rise above its own level, and that's a long way short of the glory of God. And in ourselves, therefore, left to ourselves, we are hopelessly beaten, and we cannot accomplish that which this text sets before us.

Some people would teach us that there is such a thing in life as sinless perfection. I suggest that this is utterly contrary to all New Testament principle of what a holy life really is. The implication of sinless perfection is that the Christian will attain to a state of grace when he is completely free from all sin.

And yet one John 1 8 says, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We sing that lovely chorus, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, all his wondrous compassion, purity, O thou spirit divine, all my nature refine. But he doesn't do that.

If that chorus said, O thou spirit divine, make all my nature mine, thy nature mine, I would be happier about it. For the whole principle of the New Testament in holy living is the replacement of my life by the life of Jesus in me. The Old Testament points us to it when I read, they that wait upon the Lord shall exchange their strength.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, instead of the briar there shall be the myrtle tree, instead of the life of replacement. And beloved friend, New Testament holiness is not your human life and mine brought up to some great high level of development, but it is the divine life of God brought down to the lowest level of the uttermost need of our heart. My New Testament does not teach sinless perfection, it teaches sinful corruption.

I must therefore face my own inability in my own strength to live a holy life. And understand that the principle of the holy life is the ability of the indwelling spirit to meet and replace the inability of the flesh. Some time ago, in fact just after the conference which I was sharing with Stephen Alford, I was flying back

to Chicago.

It was late at night, it was snowing, the ceiling was low, the visibility was very little, and planes were very much delayed. Eventually we were told that this plane was about to take off, and so we got on board. It was packed.

I got into the last seat, I think, and sat down. I saw men on the wings scraping off the ice. I saw the snow falling heavily and saw the ceiling was low and the visibility was very little.

And then I remembered that someone told me a little way there to ago that the weight of a Boeing jet was 150,000 pounds, and there was another 150,000 pounds weight of gasoline in the wing. 300,000 pounds. A snowy night, low ceiling, little visibility, and I never put my weight down in the plane completely anyway.

And I began to think myself, how is this man going to get this colossal weight off the ground? Well obviously he did. There was a moment when there was a desperate roar, and if you travel economy class you know what a roar it is. And the plane moved along to the edge of the runway and then moved down the runway at a fantastic speed until reaching about 180 miles an hour.

The front of the plane went up in the air and it began to soar up and up and up until very soon it was at 40,000 feet among the stars and it blew a clear sky and no fog and no snow. What had happened? There was a moment in the experience of that plane because of the operation of a law within it, that it was enabled to overcome the downward pull of the law of gravity. And the law of aerodynamics lifted that great weight away above.

Gravity still existed indeed. If the engines failed to operate then gravity would take over. But as that plane lifted itself up from the ground it was mastered by a new law.

Do you remember that the apostle Paul said the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death? A holy life my friend is not by might nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord. The responsibility for holiness, be ye holy for I am holy. The resistance to holiness, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Our reception of holiness.

1 Corinthians 1:30, the Lord Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Where we fail to attain by effort, bless the Lord, we obtain by faith. And just as we receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith for salvation, so we walk in him and receive him by faith for our sanctification.

Holiness is not an it, it is not an experience, nor is it a blessing, it is a person. Jesus himself. The only good thing about a Christian is Christ.

Never does the New Testament take us away from Christ as Lord to the Holy Spirit. It is he, the Holy Spirit, who makes real the lordship of Christ. It is not on to Pentecost for the church but it's back to Calvary.

Jesus said, you remember, at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. So the Lord Jesus has made unto us righteousness for a guilty past, sanctification for a triumphant present, and redemption for all the uncertainty of the future.

If I am to receive this gift therefore of a holy life, I must abandon my struggle to live it, and lay my inability to live a holy life exactly where I laid my sin, at the feet of Jesus Christ. Have you ever done that? Taken

the inability, the complete helplessness to fulfill this command, and to be holy, and laid it all at the feet of Jesus Christ our Lord, to find in him our victory. Someone has said that great saints are simply great receivers, men who take their holiness by faith, and go on taking it by faith.

This is a crisis, a crisis which in some instances occurs years after conversion, when a Christian suddenly realizes that the Christian life is not lived by effort with God's help, it is lived by faith in Jesus Christ, who now replaces his power to meet my weakness. A crisis that's maintained by a constant process, a step of faith that begins inaugurate a new attitude to the Christian life. A moment in which the Holy Spirit flashes into our mind the truth that the opposite to everything that we are by nature is in the person of Jesus, and he is in us to produce the opposite.

In other words, if you're impatient, you have his patience. If you're impure, you have his purity. If you're bitter in spirit, you have his grace.

If you're critical in spirit, you have his love. If you're worldly in spirit, you have his glory. The opposite to everything that I am by nature is in Christ, and he by his spirit is in you.

And therefore, in every moment of satanic temptation, I may look up to him and say, now Lord, I claim in this situation, I claim thy grace, thy patience, thy purity, thy love, thy holiness. What do you see, dear friend, in your life tonight that is contrary to the character of Christ and therefore contrary to his will for you? Are you willing to forsake that? Then you must go to Jesus now and receive the opposite virtue to meet that vice and that sin and praise him for the victory. I don't know how I can quite put this except in rather a clumsy word.

But I want to say to you that the whole genius of our salvation is that a child of God is intended to be an eschatological phenomena. I simply mean by that a projection from heaven into time. A sample before the world of the kind of life that God intends his family to live.

A life that cannot be dismissed without, first of all, people have found the explanation, our reception of holiness. Jesus made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. You remember this great hymn that is deeply rooted in Keswick in the days of Hanley Mole and Evan Hopkins? My saviour, thou hast offered rest, O grant it then to me, the rest of ceasing from myself to find my all in thee.

In thy strong hand I lay me down, so shall the work be done. For who can work so wondrously as the Almighty One? My receptivity. Then, fourthly, the realization of this in life.

Ephesians 5 18. Be being filled with the Spirit. A present continuous experience and a present increasing experience.

For God fills what we are prepared to empty. And that which matters in all of our lives tonight is that you and I should be living to capacity. It was the late Dr. Charles Inwood from a Keswick platform here on one occasion, and I quote him, said this, there is no such thing as a once and for all filling of the Holy Spirit.

It is a continuous appropriation of a continuous supply from Jesus Christ himself. It is a moment by moment faith in a moment by moment filling, and a moment by moment cleansing. As I trust him, he fills me.

The moment I begin to believe, that moment I begin to receive. And as long as I keep on believing, praise the Lord, I keep on receiving. Every step of faith and obedience enlarges my capacity for more of him.

And every moment of disobedience and unbelief shrinks my capacity for Christ. At any moment in your life as a Christian, in any of our lives, if I disobey the Lord, though we may never lose our relationship, you cannot break a relationship, you can break a friendship, you can break a connection, but you can't break a relationship. And at any moment of disobedience, though you may not break the relationship, you may lose your fellowship.

A relationship established by a new birth is eternal, but fellowship depends on obedience and faith. And at such a time, if a Christian disobeys God and rejects some command of the Lord and gets out of the will of God, though he may continue in Christian work, he may continue preaching, he may continue witnessing, he may continue serving on the mission field, he may continue doing all of these things, but in point of fact, God has put that man on the shelf, he's unusable, because he's disobedient. And that fellowship is only restored immediately in response to renewed obedience and repentance.

Some time ago, I was taking a campaign in the Caird Hall in Dundee. One day, I went with a friend walking along the north bank of the River Tay. We came to the place where there's that magnificent structure, that railway bridge, crossing that great wide estuary.

And as we passed it, we noticed that underneath that bridge, there were large, enormous concrete pillars, full of slime and dirt and seashells, sticking up above the muddy bed of the river. And this reminded us that there, many years ago, there had been a tragic disaster. When a train going over that old bridge, the bridge had collapsed in a storm and many people had been drowned.

But there, right where that disaster was, there is now, as many of you know, that lovely new bridge. Several hours later that day, I came back to that place. And as I did so, I just happened to look out to where the bridge was, and I rubbed my eyes for a moment, because there was no sign of the concrete pillars.

No sign of the slime, the mud, the seaweed, all gone. All I could see was the new bridge. For a moment, I began to ask myself, has somebody come along here with excavators and rooted them all out? Well, of course not.

But in the intervening hours, one thing had happened. The tide had come in. When the tide of that ocean fullness swept into that estuary, all the signs of that old disaster had been completely removed.

My dear listener, my dear friend, I believe that it is God's purpose for every one of us listening to this meeting tonight, that whatever may have been the tragedy, the failure, the breakdown, the disaster in your life in the past, that God should take us back to that very place, and right on the scene of the disaster, the tide of his fullness should come in, and all the marks of that tragedy be obliterated forever. For the Lord has come himself into his temple, and filled us with his grace, and with his power, and with his spirit. The responsibility to holiness, be ye holy.

But the cry that has come from our hearts, Lord, who shall deliver me from this body of death? The reception of holiness, the very person of Jesus. The reality of it in daily life, be ye being filled with his spirit. May the Lord make that real to some heart here tonight, and may God give you grace right now to step out of the self-life into the Christ life, and to prove Jesus Christ.

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