

The Necessity of Holiness

by Edward Davies

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of pursuing holiness for true Christian living and preparation for heaven.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 5:27, Philippians 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification"

Description

Edward Davies preaches on the necessity of holiness for believers, emphasizing that being converted does not make one holy, as seen throughout the history of the Church. He highlights the presence of unholy tempers and passions in believers, stressing the importance of striving for Christian perfection and victory over inward and outward sins. Davies explains that holiness is essential for fulfilling daily duties, maintaining peace in trials, presenting a true representation of Christianity to others, and ultimately glorifying God and preparing for eternity.

Transcript

Having considered the subject of holiness as it pertains to God and to man, and seen what it implied in that exalted state, we would now inquire, not if it would be convenient, but if it is necessary for those who have experienced pardoning mercy, to go on to Christian perfection? Can they not fold their hands, and sit still and sing psalms after they are converted? or must they fight "the good fight of faith," and have that fellowship with the Father by which they may prove that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin?"

1. Let us more fully consider the fact that we are not made holy when we are converted. This has been the opinion and experience of the Church for 1800 years. It is a settled fact, that sin has been found in believers in all these years. By sin in believers, we mean unholy tempers and passions, as pride, self-will, lust, anger. These are the seeds of sin, the remains of the carnal mind, the latent depravity that is left in the heart, "the roots of bitterness" that spring up to perplex the child of God. The question is not whether they fall into actual transgression or no, for he that committeth sin is of the devil; but whether they still have these enemies of God seeking for mastery in their heart, after their sins have been forgiven?

We are fully satisfied that it is a glorious thing to be a child of God, an heir of heaven, a temple of the Holy Ghost, and to have victory over inward and outward sins, and this we must have to retain our sonship.

Still sin may lurk in the soul, and only seek a suitable opportunity to gain the mastery. When the apostle writes to the church at Corinth, he calls them sanctified in Christ Jesus; he says, Ye are washed, ye are sanctified," that is, from fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, etc. Still he says he could "not write unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ; ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal?"

Now here we have the pen of inspiration recording the fact that the believers at Corinth were sanctified on the one hand, as compared with their former state, and yet they were carnal on the other, as compared with what the holy law required them to be, and as to what the gospel provided for them. And this passage is in strict accordance with the tenor of the Scripture. "Having, therefore, these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," was the prayer of the apostle for the church at Thessalonica, And the church at Ephesus had works, and labor, and patience, and for Christ's sake they had labored, and had not fainted, and yet they had "left their first love." And the church at Sardis was exhorted to "strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die," for their "works were not perfect before God."

But we need not go to past ages for proof; we can find it nearer home. Does not the experience of all Christians testify to the same fact. While they know that they love God, yet they do not love him supremely. The love of God is not perfected in them.

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love."

Still they feel the Spirit of God

"Carrying on his work within,

Striving till he cast out sin."

The same fact is implied in the commands of the Bible to the Christians "to be holy," "to be perfect," "to cleanse themselves." These would be useless if they had obtained the fullness at conversion.

2. Holiness is a necessity, not only because we are not made perfect in love when converted, but also to fit us for the faithful discharge of every daily duty, to God, to ourselves, our families, and to the world around. We never can discharge these duties in a becoming manner, acceptable to God and becoming to men, without holiness, This is manifest to all.

3. We must possess this holiness, or we can not maintain perfect peace and submission to God, amid all the trials, losses, and crosses of life. Otherwise there will be murmuring and misery.

4. We need holiness, that we may present a fair exhibition of our holy religion to the gazing multitude. Alas! alas! that so many that name the name of Christ, fail to depart from all iniquity, and to show the "beauty of holiness," the excellences of the religion of Jesus to those among whom they live. A fond mother, amid the cares of her family, gave way to a peevish temper, till her son was led to exclaim, "If that is religion, I don't want it." Her prayers for her son were unavailing, because her life contradicted her profession.

5. Holiness is necessary, that we may answer the great end for which we were created. Was it not to glorify God on earth, and live with him for ever? Now we all know that sin interferes with the glory of God on earth, and disqualifies us from meeting God in heaven.

When the pure flame of perfect love burns in our hearts, our lives are all in harmony with God, and profitable to men, and we are ready at any moment "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

6. Nothing but holiness will satisfy the nature and demands of the law of God. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. It emanates from a pure source, and cannot make an unjust claim. The God of eternal rectitude has placed man under these laws as he came out of his hands, and every fact of his character must be tested by these laws, passions, thoughts, motives, and acts. The law will not compromise with sin in a believer or unbeliever; all sin is condemned by this perfect law of purity. This law applies in full force to every sin, within or without. It is gloriously true, that we live now in a reign of mercy, while Jesus is on his mediatorial throne, and here remaining depravity may be pardoned, and man, who feels the risings of self against God, lust against purity, pride against humility, doubt against faith, and of anger against pity, and fear against love, may check them, and seek pardon for them now, through repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, till God, purity, humility, faith, pity, and love shall have the ascendancy. But there is no pardon for such in the eternal world, -- yet if these sins are not removed, they will exist forever."

In that world we have the reign of justice and the final judgment, and sin and reigning justice can not exist in heaven. Hence it is in this life that we must walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, and walk in the light as God is in the light, and attest that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." So that the law of eternal rectitude cannot be satisfied by any other method than by perfect obedience, or by a perfect faith in him who died to atone for sin, with a fixed purpose to sin no more. The law is holy, and demands holiness, and this can be obtained only in this life.

7. The mission of the Church demands holiness in its members. It is true, God is pleased to use the labors of men, who are not fully consecrated, to some extent. But we know also that, other things being equal, the most holy will be the most useful.

(1) Without the light that holiness affords, the vision of the Church will be dim, and it will be impossible to see the awful state of the world around. Millions are marching on the verge of eternal destruction, yet without holy light she cannot realize their fearful state. Neither can she diffuse the saving light of the gospel among men in darkness of spiritual death, without the glorious light of perfect love. This may enable her to send forth her healing rays into the world's dark chaos.

(2) The mission of the church is a mission of purification; it is her province to diffuse the cleansing power of the gospel, for the sanctifying of the souls of men. But this she can never do without holiness. The great heart of the human family is chilled till spiritual death prevails, and it is for the Church to have that baptism of fire, that will enable her to melt away this coldness, and diffuse the light of life and the fire of love.

(3) The world is in darkness and the shadow of death. "Darkness hath covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Now it is the mission of the Church to become the "light of the world;" a "city that is set on a hill can not be hid;" but it is only when the Church shines forth in the beauty of holiness, that she can scatter this hellish gloom, and illuminate the world.

(4) God has given the Church to accomplish the conversion of the world. This is the grand ultimate for which the judgment fires linger, and the judgment day is postponed. But how can the Church arise and fulfill this great mission, unless she can shake off the sloth and weakness of inbred sin, and gird herself in the strength and majesty of holiness, till his testimony shall sway the world as though the breath of the Almighty was in it. Then "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose!

8. This holiness is an absolute necessity as a preparation for heaven. That holy place, the palace of our heavenly King, and the abode of "elect angels" that have "kept their first estate," can never be defiled with the "filthiness of the flesh or spirit" which inbred sin implies. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie;" all sin defiles, and therefore all sin is excluded. But if none but the holy can enter heaven, what will become of that portion of the Church on earth that do not "go on to perfection" before they die?

(1) When they were converted they promised to "forsake all sin," and "serve God faithfully for life;" and on this consideration they secured pardon for past sin, having believed upon Christ.

(2) If they have faithfully kept that promise, they have forsaken every sin within and without, and have thus maintained a conscience void of offense, retained their justification, and pressed on to the fullness, and they are fit for the kingdom of heaven.

(3) If they have broken their vows, by falling into sin, they have forfeited their justification, and are not fit for the kingdom. It is to be feared that too many are in just such a place, sinning and repenting, promising and breaking their promises, trying in vain to follow Christ, and yet maintain the friendship of this world, and live after its fashions and follow its vanities. One of these pitiable members of the Church, was so fond of show in dress that she had her shroud made and put on while she was sick, that she might see how she would look when laid out in death, and dressed up for the grave.

Is it not awfully possible that ministers of the holy gospel should render themselves unfit for heaven by seeking the praise of men rather than the praise of God? O, for that perfect humility that sinks us into the dust before God, and gives all the glory to that Saviour, who is blessed for evermore!

"Wash me, and make me thus thine own;

Wash me, and mine thou art;

Wash me, but not my feet alone--

My hands, my head, my heart.

The atonement of thy blood apply,

Till faith to sight improve,

Till hope in full fruition die,

And all my soul be love."

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