

Leads to Fanaticism

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The sermon addresses the misconceptions surrounding entire sanctification and emphasizes the importance of love and Scripture in the holiness movement.

Scripture: John 17:14

Topics: "Sanctification", "Persecution"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin addresses the misconception that the profession of holiness leads to fanaticism and impracticability, emphasizing the persecution and false accusations faced by those who pursue sanctification. He highlights the biblical warnings of being reviled and persecuted for the sake of righteousness, reminding believers of the opposition they may encounter. Baldwin cautions against falling into the trap of enthusiasm and false manifestations, urging discernment and adherence to Scripture in all spiritual experiences.

Transcript

It is objected by some that the profession of entire sanctification leads to fanaticism and makes its professors impracticable. They assert that holiness people are filled with wild and uncanny notions, that they are ignorant, superstitious and hopelessly unreliable.

No matter how learned or wise a person may have been considered before, as soon as he makes a profession of holiness people wag their heads, tap their foreheads, and shout fool, fanatic, wildfire, holy-roller, self-righteous, and a thousand other epithets of reproach. No matter how innocent, guileless and saintly the professors may be they are with very few exceptions accused of the vilest of sins and improprieties.

The Lord foresaw this condition of affairs and prepared His people for it by saying, "Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." -- Luke 6:26. "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world." -- Jno. 17:14. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." -- Matt. 5:11-12. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." -- 2 Tim. 3:12.

This method of false accusation has always been one of the devil's big sticks in his war against holiness and in fact against Christianity itself. Tertullian, after going to great lengths in naming and refuting the

charges brought against the Christians of his day, sums the whole thing up by stating that the only crime laid to their charge was their name. In his *Ad Nationes*, Book I, Chapter III, he says,

Since therefore, you who are in other cases most scrupulous and persevering in investigating charges of far less serious import, relinquish your care in cases like ours, which are so horrible, and of such surpassing sin that impiety is too mild a word for them, by declining to hear confession, which should always be an important process for those who conduct judicial proceedings; and failing to make a full inquiry, which should be gone into by such as sue for a condemnation, it becomes evident that the crime laid to our charge consists not of any sinful conduct, but lies wholly in our name.

In reply to the charge that the profession of holiness leads to fanaticism and wild notions, let us quote the following from Wesley the acknowledged leader, in modern times, of the holiness movement. A people that will keep to such a line as this, and sanctified people do, are neither fanatical nor visionary.

Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm. O, keep at the utmost distance from it! Give no place to a heated imagination, Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations, to be from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature. They may be from the devil. Therefore, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. Try all things by the written word, and let all bow down before it, You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour, if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain, literal meaning of any text, taken in connection with the context. And so you are, if you despise or lightly esteem reason, knowledge, or human learning; every one of which is an excellent gift of God, and may serve the noblest purposes.

I advise you never to use the words wisdom, reason, or knowledge, by way of reproach, On the contrary, pray that you yourself may abound in them more and more. If you mean worldly wisdom, useless knowledge, false reasoning, say so; and throw away the chaff, but not the wheat.

One general inlet to enthusiasm is, expecting the end without the means; the expecting knowledge, for instance, without searching the Scriptures and consulting the children of God; the expecting spiritual strength without constant prayer and steady watchfulness; the expecting any blessing without hearing the word of God at every opportunity.

Some have been ignorant of this device of Satan. They have left off searching the Scriptures. They said, 'God writes all the Scriptures on my heart. Therefore I have no need to read it.' Others thought they had not so much need of hearing, and so grew slack in attending the morning preaching. O, take warning, you who are concerned herein! You have listened to the voice of a stranger. Fly back to Christ, and keep in the good old way, which was once delivered to the saints; the way that even a heathen bore testimony of: 'That the Christians rose early every day to sing hymns to Christ as God.'

The very desire of 'growing in grace' may sometimes be an inlet of enthusiasm, As it continually heads us to seek new grace, it may lead us unawares to seek something else new, besides new degrees of love to God and man. So it has led some to seek and fancy they had received gifts of a new kind, after a new heart, as (1) The loving God with all our mind; (2) With all our soul: (3) With all our strength: (4) Oneness with God: (5) Oneness with Christ: (6) Having our life hid with Christ in God: (7) Being dead with Christ: (8) Rising with Him: (9) The sitting with Him in heavenly places: (10) The being taken up into His throne: (11) The being in the New Jerusalem: (12) The seeing the tabernacle of God come down among men: (13) The being dead to all works: (14) The not being liable to death, pain, or grief, or temptation.

One ground of many of these mistakes is the taking every fresh, strong application of any of these Scriptures to the heart, to be a gift of a new kind; not knowing that several of these Scriptures are not fulfilled yet; that most of the others are fulfilled when we are justified; the rest the moment we are sanctified. It remains only to experience them in higher degrees. This is all we have to expect.

Another ground of these and a thousand mistakes, is, the not considering deeply that love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love; and that all the gifts above mentioned are either the same with, or infinitely inferior to it.

It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this the heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, 'Have you received this or that blessing?' If you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are heading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom.

I say yet again, beware of enthusiasm. Such is, the imagining you have the gift of prophesying, or of discerning of spirits, which I do not believe one of you has; no, nor ever had yet. Beware of judging people to be either right or wrong by your own feelings. This no scriptural way of judging. O keep close to 'the law and to the testimony!'

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