

Motives

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the right motives when seeking holiness, as God will not answer a carnal, selfish prayer, and we must come to Him with a pure heart and a sincere desire to please Him.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 6:5, Matthew 5:8, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:3, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Heart Motives", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin preaches about the importance of having the right motives when seeking holiness, emphasizing that God looks at the heart and the intentions behind our actions. He warns against seeking holiness for selfish reasons, such as wanting to feel happy, make a good appearance, or have a remarkable testimony, stressing the need for genuine transformation and surrender to God's will. Baldwin encourages believers to seek holiness out of a desire to please God, grow in grace, and be effective vessels for sharing the Gospel, highlighting the necessity of being cleansed from inbred sin to fully love and serve God.

Transcript

The motive that prompts to any action must be right in order that the action be acceptable in the sight of God. Also the motive for asking favors of the Lord must be right before the favor can be granted. It is the motive then that either gains or forfeits the approval of God. So the motive that prompts to seeking holiness must be right. Many seek with a wrong motive, and, because they fail to get what they desire, are tempted to think that God is unable or unwilling to cleanse from inbred sin at all, at least to cleanse them; or at least that he will not do it till they are about to die. James said, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas. 4:3). He that comes to God must come with all his heart, and in the full purpose of his will throw his sin-tossed soul on the mercy of God.

A mere desire to feel happy will not gain the coveted prize. The senses are too prominent in this motive. While there is little room to doubt that if the soul is cleansed there will be deep, powerful, holy emotions, beyond what the merely justified ever have, yet the desire to obtain these pleasing emotions for their own sake is born of carnality and selfishness, and God will not answer a carnal, selfish prayer. The fact that you feel badly while others enjoy themselves is no sufficient reason for seeking deliverance. You must get deeper than that.

Then some have a secret desire to make a good appearance, and, thinking that holiness will give them the ability to do so, they strive after its attainment. They have heard those who profess holiness, testify, pray, exhort, or preach, with a great amount of liberty and unction, and they want holiness so they can do the same. This is born of emulation. If you are cleansed you will, in all probability, feel more like getting back in a corner than like "vaunting" yourself in this way.

Then some want to be able to testify to some "wonderful experience." They want people to stare at them and say, "What a wonderful experience Brother Blank has." Or, because others have an experience that is remarkable, they want to be able to testify to the same experience. Then others seek holiness because it is presented as a gospel privilege. Thousands are duped into a profession of holiness by so-called holiness evangelists, who present the glory and privilege side of the experience to the exclusion of other things just as important. Against their better judgment they are pushed and crowded into saying they are sanctified, and if they hesitate they are accused of dishonoring God. Instead of holding their cases before God for his answer and seal, they accept the statement of the evangelist or his helpers that the work is done. For the sake of your soul do not listen to such things, but be sure you obtain the experience before you testify to it.

Many other things might be mentioned but let these suffice. The essential thing is to be sure you have proper motives in seeking this high state of grace. Certain it is that the enemy will accuse and buffet you, and constantly accuse you of wrong motives; but when such things appear, to the best of your ability "cleanse your hearts" from them, and where you fail for want of strength God will supply grace.

Here are some considerations that ought to induce you to be importunate in your pleadings for deliverance.

God has told you to "grow in grace." There is little room for doubt that in your lack of entire sanctification the time will come when you will lose the ability to obey this command until you are sanctified wholly -- when God will put no more of his Spirit in the unclean receptacle. He commands you to go up and possess the land, and if you fail to obey quickly, to that extent you are displeasing God. While we would not compare the experience that follows such a failure to Israel's wilderness walk, with all its backslidings and rebellions, yet in some ways there is a resemblance. At times you will pray clear up to the highest place you ever held, then through the carelessness and sluggishness of your soul you will slip back, not into condemnation, for that is caused by actual sin, but into a gloomy, indefinite place, where you feel keenly that you are not all you should be. You may meanwhile attend camp-meetings and other general services; light accumulates, but grace is stagnated. Time and again you resolve to know more of God, but as often you are forced to say, "I cannot do the things I would." While you may not actually be retrograding, yet, as from time to time you compare present attainments with your light and your ability to follow the pillar of fire, you are tempted to think you are losing ground. This is not a necessary experience, since there are some striking exceptions; and you can go right on from the time you are converted, without a halt, into the promised land. And who would venture to say that this would not be the better way? Why should you cheat yourself out of months, or even years, of victory and be going the rounds of such conflicts when God calls you to holiness? Reader, if you are not already in the old treadmill round, keep out of it, and get the victory right away that the Lord has for you. To those who are already going the rounds of the wilderness, and who have not teachers to show them the "more excellent way," we would say, there is hope for you if you seize your opportunity.

One man said, "I used to pray for light, but I quit that, for I have more light than I know what to do with." Here is the secret of failure; if you cannot walk in all the light you have, one of two things is true, either God's grace is not sufficient for his demands, or you fail to get the grace that he intends you to have in order that you may fulfil his demands.

Let us repeat and thus enforce the fact, that the time will eventually come when you can grow no more, or at the best but very little, until you are cleansed from inbred sin. That you may have power to fulfil the command to "grow in grace" is thus seen to be an incentive to seek holiness. When you are cleansed grace has free course; all the hindrances to its growth are gone, and you will be surprised at your ability to mount heavenward. Fletcher says: A perfect Christian grows far more than a feeble believer, whose growth is still obstructed by the shady thorns of sin, and the draining suckers of iniquity. Again, as a general thing God cannot trust you with much of his power while your heart is unclean, for he knows and you know that you would consume it on your lusts. He is a jealous God and demands all the glory himself. He knows you are not worthy of any such thing, and that if you had it, it would spoil you; and so like a wise parent, he refuses to give you the thing that will cause your ruin. Although Paul had an exalted experience in holiness, yet, "through the abundance of the revelations given him," he was in danger of making shipwreck of faith, and God, to prevent such a calamity, gave him "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet" him. See to it that your heart is cleansed, and God will fill you with his power and grace, even if he does have to give you a thorn in the flesh to keep you from being exalted above measure through the abundance of your revelations.

While your heart is unclean you are unable properly to do the things that will glorify God. Your soul is weakened. Carnality saps your spiritual vitality, and at times you feel as weak as water. As you see your present lack of grace, and of ability to do these things which you are convinced God would have you to do to glorify him, earnestly cry out, "O God, deliver my soul;" and "deliverance will come."

In your present condition you are, to some extent at least, displeasing God. He cannot look upon sin with any allowance. He will send the unrepentant sinner to hell because of his sins. While by having your sins forgiven you have escaped the fires of hell, yet you often feel, as some unclean tendency of your soul asserts itself, that because of this uncleanness God is justly displeased. You are not condemned, but you do not please God as you feel you should. God wants a clean, a perfect sacrifice. But your sacrifice is tainted; it is unclean. The psalmist called upon all within him to bless the Lord; but you cannot thus bless him, since carnality will not praise the Lord. The commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart; but in your present condition you cannot do it, for there are remaining involuntary clingings to sin that are contrary to love. You love, but your love is mixed. The Rev. J. A. Wood, in Purity and Maturity says: "While the merely regenerate loves God supremely-above all else or every other object (to do less would be idolatry), he cannot love God with all his heart until he is entirely sanctified; or so long as the remaining carnality, or 'in-bred sin' as it is usually called, is not removed. This inward foe -- the 'carnal mind,' which is 'enmity against God,' must be expelled before perfect love can be possessed or enjoyed."

Desire to be like God should be an incentive to seeking holiness. When you get a glimpse of the amazing holiness of God and turn to yourself and scrutinize in the light of this holiness your own uncleanness, you may well exclaim with Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips;" or, like the lepers of old, you may well cover your lips and cry aloud, "Unclean, unclean." When you reach this place you will earnestly pray:

"O for a heart to praise my God,

A heart from sin set free;
A heart that always feels thy blood,
So freely spilt for me --
"Oh for a lowly, contrite heart,
believing, true and clean;
Which neither life nor death can part,
From him that dwells within.
"A heart in every thought renewed.
And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of thine.
"Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart,
Come quickly from above;
Write thy new name upon my heart;
Thy new, best name of love."

Once more, the interests of dying men and women demand that you be made "perfect in love." On every hand sounds the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." Nothing honors God like a clean vessel through which may pour the living streams of salvation. Missionaries need it, not only to run the gauntlet of sin and wickedness, but, above all, that they may effectively point the heathen to the holy Lamb of God. Preachers need it, not only to run the gauntlet of praise and censure, but to convince the gainsayers. Laymen need it, that they may the better let their light so shine before men that, seeing their good works, men may glorify our Father in heaven. Yea, the whole world needs it, that they may meet God in peace, and not call for the rocks and mountains to hide them from the Judge of quick and dead.

If you will honestly search the field, you will find reasons without number that should urge you forward with all your ransomed powers. Gather them up and put them in one side of the balance; then in the other side place every contrary thing, and see which is the more weighty, which is the more deserving of your immortal energies. On one side you will find delight in the praise of men, the desire of the world, the festering, gnawing canker-worms of the soul, reeking with moral filth, a veritable "body of death," steeped in blood-guiltiness like Judas of old, the "old man" of sin refusing allegiance to the King of Peace and rebelling to the bitter end against stacking arms before Immanuel's triumphant march. On the other side how changed. Love, that crowning grace of redemption, holds unlimited sway; joys immortal bud and blossom amid the thorns and thistles of earthly sorrow; quietness and confidence ride peacefully above the turbulent waves of earthly strife; hope, the perennial flower of Paradise, springs up amid the despair and melancholy of failure and defeat, causing the soul to sing and make such melody on broken lyres as drives away all discord forever. O Joy! O Peace! O Love! almost unknown on this vile earth, but spring ye

forth in the depths of my longing soul, and draw me as with cords celestial to regions where ye do bloom unfading and eternal! Ye are my choice -- my unchanging, my immortal choice!

Here are motives, which, if pondered well and allowed to determine your choice, will bring you to where you shall walk with him in white, even in this present world.

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