

# Advice to Christians Professing This High Attainment

by Randolph S. Foster

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, self-distrust, and a clear understanding of sanctification and justification in a Christian's life.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 12:1, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Philippians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, James 4:6, 1 Peter 1:15

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Humility"

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## Description

Randolph Sinks Foster emphasizes the importance of Christians being open to admonishment and counsel, regardless of their level of spiritual maturity, as even the most advanced believers may still need guidance. He encourages believers to live out their faith with humility and self-distrust, understanding the responsibilities, trials, and privileges that come with being sanctified children of God. Foster urges Christians to be cautious in their profession of faith, advising against overemphasis on verbal declarations and instead emphasizing a life that reflects their beliefs. He also highlights the significance of justification and sanctification, reminding believers of the security and blessings that come with each stage of spiritual growth.

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## Transcript

Christians often need to be admonished; and not always the less so, because of the greatness of their attainments. Admitting, as we do, that no degree of religious progress precludes mental imperfection and infirmity, even the most mature Christians may need counsel and advice; and whether they need it or not, they will, in proportion to their humility and self-distrust, thankfully receive it, when given with good intent and in a proper spirit.

It is believed that you are sincere in your profession, and that you well understand your state. You are not fanatics, not enthusiasts, not pretenders. You are God's sanctified children. Your faith has claimed, and your hearts fully embraced, the promises. You know the power of God, and are "made partakers of the Divine nature." You live, yet not you, it is Christ that liveth in you; and the life you live is a life of faith in the Son of God. But you are yet in the world; your warfare is not finished, your work not done. There are duties, trials, sufferings, responsibilities, and privileges still before you, more, and greater, it may be, than if you stood in a greatly inferior lot. The strongest and best-armed battalions are usually stationed in the most exposed and dangerous part of the fight. You ought to know, and doubtless do, that many eyes are

upon you; that your position is a shining one; that you are "compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses" -witnesses thronging the earth, ascending from the pit, and clustering from the skies, gazing upon you with very different feelings but with a common interest. How much depends upon your action! How important that you stand nobly to your post! You will need much grace, much heroism, more than the martyr's firmness. If you fall, or even waver -- you are a standard-bearer -- great will be the sensation. If you stand firm, great will be your recompense in that day.

Having found the invaluable prize of holiness, nothing is so desirable to you as its extension among your fellowmen. For this you live; for this you labor, and toil, and pray; watching for it, as they that watch for the morning." Great is your responsibility in these connections, great your peril. It will be well to keep this before your minds, and lay it away in your hearts.

Would you retain the high state to which, in the unspeakable mercy and goodness of God, you have been lifted, and would you cause others to see, and take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus, to feel the power and influence of your piety, heed further the following advice.

Do not attach too much importance to profession; here is one point where you are likely to be misled, hence the greater need of caution. Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher found it necessary to advise a discreet and cautious, a well-timed profession, in their day; the admonition is certainly quite as much needed now. There may be times when, if you live in this grace, it will be well and profitable to declare it; but there will be other times when you should not introduce it. Let your life generally declare for you; and when the circumstances seem to demand spoken testimony, be careful that it be not overwrought, that it be free from ostentation, that it be in great humility and self-abasement. Do not fall into the delusion that specific profession should be confidently and often repeated. Depend upon it, it will savor more of pride than grace; it will influence to the injury rather than the advancement of the cause, and especially if your tempers and manner of living leave any just ground of doubt as to your enjoyment of so great grace. You are tempted that it is for the glory of God. There is room for doubt whether this is not sometimes a snare. Do not, at your peril, if in your family, or business, or in any of the walks of life, or if in your inward tempers, you find ground for suspicion of yourself, do not imagine to repair this suspicion by the boldness of your profession. This is nothing short of delusion, and cannot help you, but must involve you in real condemnation. Always remember your numerous and, it may be, great frailties, and know that men see them and take account of them. There is one consideration which will bear weight with you; allowing that boldness would answer for you, it certainly would not answer for all. Yet the very ones who ought to be silent will be most likely to imitate you. It would, therefore, be better for you to give no countenance to their imprudent and injurious rashness, by observing the utmost prudence in the manner of your own witnessing. Upon this subject Mr. Wesley holds the following language:

"Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?"

"At first, perhaps, he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him; his desire to declare the loving-kindness of the Lord carrying him away like a torrent. But afterward he might; and then it would be advisable not to speak of it to them that know not God; (it is most likely it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme;) nor to others, without some particular reason, without some good in view. And then he should have special care to avoid all appearance of boasting; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God."

Be not over anxious to believe you are entirely sanctified. Rather wait in earnest prayer and trusting in God until you have a clear witness. Do not refuse to believe when there is evidence to justify faith, but neither hasten to believe in advance of the evidence. Never forget that the faith which saves, in none of its stages, has regard to yourself, but to God. It is not to believe that you are justified or sanctified, but to trust in God for the blessing you desire. How most ruinous is that instruction which turns the eye of the inquirer away from God to himself, teaching him to believe something with regard to himself, rather than to cling alone to God! It may distress you for a time to be without the witness you desire, but it is a small matter compared with the work itself; hence, be much more concerned about the latter than the former.

Do not depreciate the blessing of justification. Great wrong has been unwittingly done by unadvised teachings and expressions on the part of those who profess a higher state of grace, with regard to ordinary Christian experience. This is, and always must be, fruitful of several injurious results.

Justification is sometimes represented as an unsafe state -- as but little better, if any, than impenitency; and Christians not actually in the enjoyment of, or earnestly seeking after, a higher state of grace are considered but little more secure than the men of the world. This is most unwise.

Justifying grace is a great blessing; it cannot be too highly prized. A justified soul cannot be lost if it does not fall; it has a title to heaven; no power can deprive it of its inheritance. In this it is no less secure than the entirely sanctified soul. It does not, indeed, enjoy all that it might and should enjoy here; but still it is not without high and glorious blessings. But will the merely justified get to heaven without sanctification? By no means; but they will be sanctified. They are God's children; they cannot, if they do not forfeit the relation, fail of the inheritance. Holiness is a privilege, as such let it always be taught. But that justification, if retained, will infallibly bring its possessor to heaven is no less a truth, and it must never be surrendered.

And we subjoin here this other remark: many Christians who make no pretensions to a higher state than that of ordinary Christian experience do certainly live in such a manner, and evince such deep and earnest piety, as to make them compare favorably -- nay, I may say with advantage -- with most of those who claim, and it may be justly, to have made higher attainments; it becomes us, therefore, to be cautious how we pass condemnation upon them.

A word of counsel to those who do not profess to have attained. If you are a Christian you feel the need of entire conformity to the will of God in all things; you would not intentionally injure or hinder, but would in every way promote this great work, both in yourself and others. This is your feeling, we know; but it may be you are, nevertheless, under influences which lead you astray. Have you not allowed yourself to become indifferent to the great work of holiness, or, it may be, even prejudiced against it? Do you not sometimes speak of it in an unbecoming manner? I have sometimes heard even ministers say, with a sneer, of some erring, or it may be not erring, Christian, He is a sanctified one! How such conduct must grieve the Spirit of God! How unbecoming even a mere disciple of Christ, and how much more uncomely in a minister who believes and preaches this glorious doctrine! As you love God, and would not grieve his Spirit; as you love the Church, and would not let down or bring contempt on the simplicity and purity of religion, be cautious how you feel and speak in this connection. Be not a shame to yourselves in thus setting the seal of hypocrisy on your own profession. Rather, forgetting the things which are behind, press forward to the mark of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. O rest not until you attain to this glorious experience! If others who profess it come short of living it, and so fill you with sorrow and almost impatience, do you obtain it, and live it before them, and cause your silent example, and not your indifference, to be their reproof. And I beg of you to remember to what you are called; and as you love God

and hope for his smiles, do not permit yourself to come short.

You may pass along with some comfort and good hope, and with some progress, but be not satisfied until you attain fully. Any thing short of holiness is not the end of your faith.

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