

# Hindrances to the Present Attainment and Permanent Retention of Holiness

by Randolph S. Foster

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*The sermon explores the various hindrances that prevent Christians from attaining and retaining holiness, emphasizing the need for total surrender to God.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:7, 1 Peter 1:16

**Topics:** "Entire Sanctification", "Christian Holiness"

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## Description

Randolph Sinks Foster delves into the reasons why many Christians do not attain the high and desirable experience of entire sanctification. He highlights the failure to fully grasp the privilege and the resulting insensitivity to obligation as key factors. Foster emphasizes that the hindrances to achieving holiness do not stem from lack of privilege, effort, ordained means, necessity, God's will, Jesus' sacrifice, the Holy Spirit's power, or duty. Rather, hindrances arise from a lack of clear teaching, extravagant behaviors of some professing holiness, prejudices against the doctrine, and most significantly, Christians' unwillingness to fully surrender to God, allowing self to reign alongside Christ.

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## Transcript

Why is not this high and desirable experience generally attained by Christians? This is a point worthy of more extended consideration than can be bestowed upon it in this connection; yet here we may venture to suggest a few reasons. The two cardinal reasons were hinted at in the introductory chapter to this work; a failure clearly to apprehend privilege, and consequent insensitivity to obligation. But these causes of neglect and immaturity arise out of others, and produce, in their turn, a complication of other and inferior hindrances. The reason why Christians generally are not entirely sanctified is not because it is not their privilege; not because they have sought for this great blessing earnestly and persistently, and have failed to attain; not because of the insufficiency of ordained means to bring them to its possession; not because they do not need it; not because God does not will it; not because the blood of Jesus was not shed for it; not because the Holy Spirit is not able to effect it; not because duty does not require it; none of these. It is not because Christians do not, on the whole, prefer holiness; not because they would not wish to be delivered from sinfulness; not because they are entirely without efforts in this direction. Most Christians, perhaps there are no exceptions, do have hours of deep and earnest solicitude, and crying to God; do mourn over their short-comings, and cherish habitual aspirations and longings after a higher state -- a

state faintly apprehended, and fitfully sought after. But they do not succeed, in a majority of instances, until near the close of life, perhaps in the very struggle of death, for many painful reasons, among which we may name particularly the following:

There is an obvious reason why this experience is not ordinarily attained at the same time that regenerating grace is; namely, the mind of the penitent is not turned to it distinctly at all; perhaps not one in a thousand ever think of it at that time. Their whole effort is directed to the gain of pardon and reconciliation. For this they pray, and weep, and mourn. The cry of their heart is, "God be merciful to me a sinner," "Save, or I perish." Their faith is kept upon this one object. Allowing, therefore, entire sanctification to be a distinct work, as we do, and allowing that its condition is faith, it is no marvel that it is not obtained synchronically with pardon. It is not asked for, it is not believed for; it is not, of course, bestowed.

His soul rests for the present in perfect peace. Time passes on, temptation comes, and now he feels an inward motion -- the uprising of some unholy temper. This first motion to evil is followed by others of the same kind; and the young convert awakes to the fact that there are lurking enemies within him, seeking to bring him again into captivity. He is surprised to find that, though he cannot doubt his pardon, (if indeed the new discovery does not awaken doubt,) and though conscious of the great change he has experienced, and though assured of the love of God, yet he is not entirely sanctified. He awakens to the consciousness of an evil lying deep within -- entrenched in his very nature. The discovery brings distress. It is not enough that he is pardoned, he now feels that he must also be healed.

But hindrances arise; and alas, but too generally, hindrances which long keep the enemy in possession of the heart, so as to disturb its peace, and divide its empire.

The first hindrance we shall name is that of defective and unsound teaching, and, consequent upon this, confused and incoherent views; as expressed in another connection, privilege is not apprehended, duty is not enforced. There is not sufficient plainness and simplicity in the teaching of the pulpit. The doctrine is too much taken from its connections, and presented in such a manner as to intimidate and confuse, rather than enlighten and encourage. The subject is mystified, and made to assume the character of the marvelous and impracticable; whereas it should be placed before Christians in simple earnestness, as a part of their common privilege and calling.

Without startling them with it as a far-fetched novelty, as a thing to be speculated about, it should be kept before them, in connection with other doctrines and duties, as the great point to which they are constantly to aim, and which, in the use of the means, they are to expect momentarily. Let it thus be insisted upon in simple, honest earnestness, and multitudes will seek and find the blissful experience.

2. A great hindrance has arisen to the progress of this work from the manifest extravagances and inconsistencies of some who make a profession of it -- extravagances more in language than conduct, evincing ignorance, pride, and presumption; and inconsistencies of life and temper, convicting them either of hypocrisy or delusion. These causes have done much to disgust and injure honest and sincere minds, occasioning them to look upon the whole subject either with doubt or fear.

Identifying the doctrine and experience of holiness with the imperfections and improprieties alluded to above, and attaching, as a consequence, a kind of opprobrium to the profession, many have turned away from the whole subject with a strong distaste, if not absolute disgust. This is not excusable. We do not apologize for it. But it is not unnatural that it should be so.

What are called schools have been formed: a class of Christians have separated themselves from their brethren, and this has brought them and their profession into discredit. We must believe it has greatly, though we are convinced not intentionally, injured this work of God. Their influence among their brethren is impaired, and what of good is in them is lost.

But having thus candidly admitted a great hindrance as originating with those who profess this grace, we must, with equal candor and no less pain, record another and more fatal hindrance, coming from the ranks of Christians making no such profession. Some of these, having become prejudiced against the doctrine, and particularly against the profession, from the causes above alluded to, have indulged in a spirit and strictures both discreditable to themselves and injurious to others; in some cases bestowing upon the whole subject sneers and contemptuous epithets, and so grieving the Spirit of grace, and discouraging and absolutely intimidating those who would seek and enjoy its blessed experience.

But the great hindrance is in ourselves; we are not willing, we will not consent. We speak of Christians generally. Many Christians seem desirous to get along with as little religion as possible, just so they may not forfeit them. hope; others have higher aims; they wish to be exemplary, and will not be satisfied without the comforting influence of the Spirit; but the number is comparatively small who honestly desire, and earnestly endeavor after, entire consecration -after all the mind that was in Christ. Satan may not be tolerated, but Christ does not reign without a rival. Self assumes a part of the government; and while we would not for any consideration allow Satan to divide the sovereignty with Christ, we most earnestly contend to divide it ourselves. What a fatal mistake! How much of loss and unhappiness it causes to ourselves! how much of good it prevents with regard to others! We must have a little of our own will with regard to our property, our time, our indulgences; we must spare some of our lusts, not quite put them to death; we cannot quite consent that the Lord should be all in all; in most things he may govern, but in some (minor things, to be sure) we must have it our way. Here is the great cause why we do not become wholly the Lord's -- we cannot quite crucify self.

Consider what is required of you; ponder well your responsibility; and with your eye upon the present, and your mind upon the future, act nobly your part. Contend for the mastery. Other hindrances than those named may appear; doubtless this will be so. But what then? Shall they prevail? Duty is plain. Privilege is manifest. A thousand voices urge you forward. An Omnipotent hand is at your command. Go forward. The greater the hindrance the greater the triumph, and the more glorious the reward. Be animated to effort, and may you prevail! Remember in whom is your strength, and doubt not.

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