

Motives to Entire Holiness

by Randolph S. Foster

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness and the various motives that encourage us to pursue it, including its intrinsic excellence, God's command, the interest of the Master's cause, and the circumstances surrounding us, ultimately leading to our destiny in eternity.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 5:27, 1 Timothy 4:12, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Randolph Sinks Foster preaches about the beauty and necessity of holiness, emphasizing that motives to holiness can be found everywhere, from the heavens to the earth, and within ourselves. The sermon highlights the intrinsic excellence and glory of holiness, the requirement of holiness by God, the importance of holiness for glorifying God and advancing His cause, the urgency for Christians to be fully committed in these significant times, and the eternal consequences of holiness in contrast to eternal darkness without it.

Transcript

Motives to holiness! Where shall we not go to find them! What direction shall we take to elude them? . Are they not everywhere? Do they not come down from the heavens, and spring up from the earth? Do we not feel them within; and behold them without us? Is there any thing that has a voice that does not enforce them? Do not even mute and dumb things urge them, with silent but persuasive eloquence? What is heaven but an eternal monument of its glory? What is hell but a terrible and endless declaration of its necessity? The happiness of the former and the anguish of the latter equally impress it upon the hearts of thoughtless mortals. Indeed, turn where we will, whether to time or eternity, to the throne or the abyss, a million arguments commend it to us, a million preachers urge it upon us.

If the constitution of the universe and the history of Providence unite to impress a single great lesson upon mankind, it is that which is considered in these pages -- the beauty and utility of holiness; if they combine to constitute one great motive, it is a motive to holiness. But for the deep-seated perversity of our fallen nature, nothing more would be requisite; the sermon of a ceaselessly-preaching universe would prove effectual; Providence would not teach in vain; the cry that comes from above and beneath, from within and without, as from the grave and the judgment, from heaven and hell, and from all regions, and from all beings, admonishing us in solemn language, "Be ye holy," would sink deep into our hearts. Alas! we have no ear for the solemn discourses; the great sermon proceeds; we heed it not. God preaches in all nature,

in all providence; we hear him not. Death, and judgment, and eternity, and heaven, and hell, prolong the discourse; but we close our ears against them. Our own hearts take up the theme, and every throb enforces it; but we smother the voice, and will not hearken.

But, reader, turning away from these general reflections, let us invite your attention to a few, a very few, of the motives we desire particularly to bring to your consideration.

1. What ought to be an irresistible motive to holiness is found in its own essential nature, its intrinsic excellence and glory.

Are single virtues, separate and alone, worthy of love -- entitled to the homage of our hearts, as fidelity, charity, filial affection? Do ye yield to these an involuntary admiration wherever found? How much more should we esteem the constellation of all virtues in a single heart! If we pause to contemplate with delight a solitary grace, blooming alone amid a desert waste, with what greater delight should we behold an oasis, where all the graces bloom in perfection of beauty together, shedding their blending fragrance over one lovely spirit!

What would you not give if that spirit were yours? If it might be purchased, would worlds, were they in your possession, be too great a price? You attach value to wealth, beauty, learning, good name, happiness. It is well. These are all desirable; but how less than dust in the balance are they compared with conscious, inviolable virtue! Would you not prefer to be the hero of a single virtue, rather than conqueror of the world? -- a martyred Paul, shining in radiant vestments, rather than a bloody Alexander, dazzling with the splendors of conquest? Why do you attach the idea of beauty and glory to angels? Is it not because they are holy -- because they love with perfect love, adore with perfect adoration, and glow with perfect fervor? If they sing sweetly, is it not because they feel purely? Is it not holiness which spreads joy over all the celestial regions? which causes the gush and rapture of the skies? which kindles the luster and awakens the song of heaven? which suffuses the very spirit of Jehovah with his ineffable glory, and the spirits of all his holy worshippers with inexpressible and everlasting bliss? Surely, if this be so -- and who can doubt it? -- we are correct when we assume that there is, in the very nature of holiness, an infinite motive to its gain. Rubies are not so precious, and nothing that can be desired can be compared unto it.

2. But if holiness is urged upon us from a consideration of its own intrinsic excellence, much more is it from the fact that God requires it. Let us pause here, for one moment, and take in the impression of this truth. God not only prefers that we, his creatures, should be holy, but he requires it; his authority commands it. Who ever resisted his command and prospered? Reader, know you not that God is now speaking to you? Will you hearken? What does he say? Hear him, and ponder: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Is this God's speech? What does it require of you? Do not, at your peril, hasten away: Do not treat it with contempt. Remember who it is that speaketh. What will you say to him? He commands you to be holy. What will you answer him? You must answer. Will you refuse? Look well to your position. Project your thoughts forward; let your mind take in what surrounds and what lies before you, and answer to yourself the question. Can you afford to be indifferent, or even for a moment longer fail of your privilege? Let your decisions be reached in the presence and under the eye of God.

3. The interest of your Master's cause requires it; and the common glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. How can we glorify God fully without entire consecration and perfect conformity to his entire mind and will? Will not every manifest, nay, even every secret defect, mar and sully the cause and honor of our Redeemer? We are his witnesses, called to be the lights of the world: "If the light that is in us be

darkness, how great is that darkness!" Men will take knowledge of us, and thence draw their conclusions; the consequences will not terminate with ourselves; they will reach forward to the vitals of the cause.

The lives of Christians, practical exponents as they are of the principles and spirit of our religion, are among the great agencies for the conversion and sanctification of the world. Books and sermons may be resisted; even tears and entreaties may be despised; but the silent and unostentatious influence of holy lives will speak a language to the heart it cannot easily gainsay, a language which will sound on when we sleep in the dust. The dim tracery of words will be washed away and effaced from memory; but the deep lines of a beautiful example, chiseled into the heart, will remain forever. It is holiness, not the profession of it, that will give us influence both with God and men: winging our prayers with faith, and our counsels with wisdom, deriving power from above, and sending out from us currents of influence through the earth.

4. But especially we derive motives to a higher life and more entire consecration from the circumstances which surround us.

Never, since the beginning, as we believe, was there a more interesting, a more important period, than the present moment. Contemplated in any aspect, it is pregnant and portentous: a grand culminating point is undoubtedly approximating; never, therefore, did the Christian Church need to be so wide awake, so much alive, as now. Like a majestic vessel riding into harbor under the pressure of a fierce storm and full sail, the world seems nearing the port of destiny; she needs now, if ever, experienced and adroit hands to bring her safely and speedily to the mooring. The great harvest is ripe, waving with world-wide expanse. Sturdy reapers are wanted. The materials are gathered, and the temple is rising up out of the midst of them -- builders are in demand.

The Church is not ready to meet the demands of the times. And her want is in a vital point, it is radical -- at the heart. Not that she is more deficient now than formerly. This we do not believe. We are not of those who ask, "Why were the former days better than these days." The Church of Christ, if we judge correctly, was never more vital than at the present moment; but her demands have increased more rapidly than her piety. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary means. Napoleon overran and subjugated Europe with his veteran legions; but they stood still before Wellington, they were not ready for the crisis at Waterloo.

Now is the time when every soldier of Jesus should be at his post, should have on the whole armor, should do valiant battle for the Lord, proving himself a man. See how God has honored us; what a breach he has given us to fill! O that we may feel our mission, and rise up and gird ourselves to honor it! Now the world wants men, full-grown Christian men, not babes or dwarfs. The man who will dignify his position at this crisis, or even hereafter, must be worthy of it. If we would do any thing, men of God -- if we would not be ciphers in the glorious strife -- if we would not die without issue -- we must prepare for the portentous day in which God has seen fit to give us existence. Every thing now is in earnest. Quick time is the watchword. What we do must be done quickly; a moment, and the opportunity rushes past us; a moment, and we are gone; a step, and the grave contains us. If we would make impression for God, for man, we must strike now. O that we could awake and see and feel the mighty verities thronging around us, and display for once that noble and glorious spirit which becomes sons and daughters of the Most High! Every thing else will perish. Our fortunes, our heroic deeds, our distinctions -- these will all sink down to be remembered no more; what we do here, and in this cause, will live forever; the waves we create here will roll on in widening circles through eternity.

5. And let us look away for a moment into that glorious eternity; is there no motive here? How evanescent and transient are all things beneath the sun! You may live without holiness here -you cannot hereafter. Would you see the value of holiness, linger here. Pursue the upward destiny of a soul brightening under the smile of God forever, see its ever-increasing and unfolding beauty, hear the ravishing melody of its triumphant song. The ages flee away; but mightier than decay, stronger than death, the soul lives on, ascending, widening its circle, becoming more and more like God, and losing itself ever in his ineffable radiance. Such is the destiny of a soul washed in the blood of Jesus. Behold, on the other hand, a soul darkening under the frown of Jehovah. Ages fly away: its darkness broods darker still, its sorrow gathers down in denser folds: it is lost. The lengthened periods of eternity roll by, but they bring no redemption; deep, dark, dismal gloom settles around its sphere forever. Learn by the contrast the value of holiness. Its presence is life -its absence is eternal death. Could you pursue this contrast through eternity -- could you have but a faint glimpse of the reality -- you would no longer rest, but fly in trembling haste to a Saviour's wounds for shelter and for life.

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