

Hindrances to Holiness

by Samuel Logan Brengle

The main hindrances to receiving the blessing of full salvation are ignorance of the second work of the Holy Spirit, unbelief, and seeking the wrong thing.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Hosea 4:6, John 10:10, 2 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Philippians 2:5, Hebrews 3:1-2, Hebrews 4:2, James 1:2, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "The Nature of Salvation", "Hindrances to Holiness"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes that God offers a perfect salvation that empowers believers to overcome worldly challenges and live in accordance with His will. He identifies several hindrances to receiving this salvation, including ignorance of its existence, unbelief in God's promises, and the pursuit of the wrong expectations regarding salvation. Brengle encourages believers to seek a deeper understanding of holiness, which is not merely about external conduct but involves a transformation of the heart and character. He concludes that true holiness is attainable through humility and a close relationship with Jesus, who exemplifies the perfect model of a holy life.

Transcript

God has provided a salvation for us that is perfect in every particular, and that satisfies both the heart and the mind. It makes its possessor 'more than conqueror' over the world, the flesh and the devil, and enables him to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. It is altogether worthy of its Author. It is a 'great salvation.' It is not a mere set of beliefs, nor a poor pitiful little profession, but a full, joyous, super-abounding, all-conquering life. Glory to God! This is the more abundant life. Jesus said: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John x. 10). Praise the Lord, this life is mine, and has been for fifteen years.

And now, for the sake of those who have not obtained this crowning blessing, I wish to point out some of the hindrances to its reception and the reason why so few comparatively, have it.

1. Many are ignorant of it. Vast multitudes of professing Christians have never heard of a second work of the Holy Spirit that purifies the heart and perfects it in live. It is strange to say, an unpopular theme and is not much spoken of outside Salvation Army Holiness Meetings, and so God could say today, as He did of old, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hos. iv. 6). But this ignorance is due, not altogether to the fact that it is a subject little spoken about, but also because so few people go to God's Word for their standard of life and experience. It is all written out there so plain that a fool need not err; but most

professors of religion prefer to take their standard from the people round about them rather than from God's Book. Paul says of such folks; 'But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise' (2 Cor. x. 12). And they never will be wise, unless they cease looking at poor, perishing men and look to Jesus only. Wisdom is from above, and must be sought from God Himself and from the study of His word, and not from the conduct of the people about us.

II. Unbelief. Many are familiar with the Word of God, but they have not an appropriating faith. They read the exceeding great and precious promises, but it never occurs to them that on the fulfillment of the conditions they can have and will have the things promised. It is said of these people: 'But the word preached did not profit them. not being mixed with faith in them that heard it' (Heb. iv. 2). Instead of crying to God to bring their experience up to the standard of the Bible, they explain the Bible down to the level of their experience, and so never receive the glorious revelation of Jesus to their hearts and the fullness of grace therein promised.

III. Some, seek the wrong thing. They expect the blessing of full salvation to bring deliverance from temptations, infirmities, natural consequences of broken laws and the like. I once heard an educated minister pray, 'Lord save us from our impurities and infirmities.' My heart said 'Amen' to the first part, but not to the latter. Full salvation delivers always from impurity, but not always from infirmities in this world. God uses our infirmities to bless us. Paul gloried in his infirmities because, through them, the power of Christ rested upon him (2 Cor. xii. 9-10). We read also that Jesus was 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities' (Heb. iv. 15).

Infirmities and temptations are incorporated by our Heavenly Father into His educational and disciplinary for us, and are for our highest good and we need not expect to be entirely free from them while we are in the body. If we were free from them we could not enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus, nor sympathize with our brethren, and that would be an immeasurable loss to us. It is because Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that He is able to sympathize with and succor us when we are tempted (Heb. ii. 18). And it is only as we enter into the common temptations and trials and are afflicted with the common infirmities of humanity, that we can be touched with tender sympathy for, and be largely used in blessing, humanity. Thus, we should not seek for an experience that will save us from these things, but rather should do as we are told, and 'count it all joy' when we 'fall into divers temptations' (Jas. i. 2).

Nor does this experience of full salvation save us from the natural consequences of broken laws. A man may be enjoying the fullness of God's salvation but if he ignorantly break the laws of finance or health he may expect to go into bankruptcy or lose his health as surely as the vilest sinner. And this does not argue at all that his Heavenly Father is displeased with him morally, or that he has lost any measure of his salvation.

Nor does this experience enable us to please everybody and appear perfect to all men. Our hearts may be as pure as the heart of an archangel, and we may love with a perfect love, and yet our conduct may be misjudged and we be accounted by others as being anything but fully saved. The brethren of Jesus did not believe on Him (John vii. 5) and His critics called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber. His servants will hardly be above their Master, but should rejoice to be as their Master.

There are two reasons for this. One is that we 'have this treasure in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. iv. 7) -- that is, the love of God in our hearts may be perfect and His salvation complete, but because of our natural

infirmities we may not be able to fully express in our conduct the holy affections and tender sympathies of our hearts. Just as clear water in a blue bottle will look blue, or in a yellow bottle will look yellow, so the pure, crystal-like salvation of God in our hearts takes on the color of our earthen vessel.

The other reason is that, just as when you look at a landscape through smoked glasses everything looks smoky, so the eyesight of many people is so distorted and blurred by sin, by prejudice, by unbelief, that even if our conduct be perfect, they, looking at us through the medium of their own sinfulness. will criticize us as they criticized our Lord before us. This being so, we need not expect the experience of full salvation to make us appear perfect in the eyes of men, but must content ourselves with having a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man, and in having His assurance that our ways please Him.

Others are seeking a sort of 'third heaven' experience, similar to what Paul had, in which they will see visions, hear voices, be visited by angels and constantly have tumultuous and rapturous joy. Like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, they say, 'Master, it is good for us to be here,' (Luke ix. 33), not knowing that Jesus wants to lead them down into the valley to cast out devils. Far be it from me to discourage any soul from seeking any experience mentioned in the Bible! Has not my own heart almost burst with fullness of joy and love? and cannot I, in the Spirit, say with Paul, 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' (I Cor. ix. 1). Truly, the revelation Jesus gave me of Himself is unutterable, but I got this revelation not by seeking some marvelous experience, but by humbling myself to walk with Him, to wait for His counsel, to do His will and to believe what He said. Then He came to me and took up His abode in my heart. He has shown me, however, that although I am to have His joy, holiness does not consist so much in rapturous, sublimated experiences, as in lowly, humble, patient, trustful love.

But while some people put the experience up among the clouds, others leave it down among the fogs, and so fail to get it. They think that it consists in simply being free from condemnation, forgetting that a justified man is not condemned. For instance, a man has been condemned about the use of tobacco, or a woman about the feathers in her hat. Each feels that such things are not consistent with a Christian life, and, after a struggle with pride and habit, yields and casts away the offending thing. Of course there is now no longer any condemnation, and that soul feels justified; but it may not yet be sanctified, and it is not, unless, when the tobacco and feathers went out and off, the Holy Ghost came in, destroying every root of bitterness and sin out of the heart. Holiness is a thing of the heart; it is the purging away of the dross of the soul; it is the renewing of our whole nature so that we are made 'partakers of the Divine nature' (2 Pet. i. 4). It makes 'the tree good.'

My little eight-year-old boy had the nature of holiness revealed to him by the Holy Ghost. Some time ago he professed to get saved, and I think he did get saved, though he is not so saintly as I feel confident he yet will be. One evening, not long since, however, he said to his mother: 'Mamma, I'm tired of living this way.' His mamma, of course, queried, 'Why, darling, what's the matter now?' 'I want to be good all the time,' said George. 'You tell me to go and do things, and I go and do them, but I feel angry inside. I want to be good all the time.' The next morning, as soon as he woke up, he said, 'Mamma, I want you to put that text, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," in my text book.' And then when he prayed he pleaded the prayer of the royal Psalmist, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me' (Ps. cxxxix. 23-24).

Now, holiness makes one good all the time; not only in conduct, but also in character; not only in outward act, but also in inward thought and wish and feeling, and those who are content with anything below this, will miss the blessing.

IV. Another hindrance is the failure to rightly 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus who was faithful . . .' (Heb. iii. 1-2), and to appropriate the grace He offers us.

The other day an earnest Christian woman was complaining to me at her breakfast table about her pride and her temper, which she had found unconquerable. I suggested that she should consider Jesus, and asked her how she could be proud in the presence of His deep humility. I requested her to imagine Him, the King of kings, the Lord of life and glory, humbling Himself and meekly carrying His Cross up Calvary, amid the mocking crowd, while she walked by His side or followed His train in pride, with high and haughty head. She saw the point, and while we were at family prayers, she said she could never forget that lesson in humility. If people would but study the life and spirit of Jesus, and gladly let His mind be in them, the subject of holiness would be greatly simplified. Paul said: 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' (Phil. ii. 5), and then he goes on to show us that this mind is one of deepest humility, which led Jesus to empty Himself of His glory and humble Himself to die on the Cross as the vilest of men, and it is this humble, self-forgetful, loving mind Paul pleads with us to have.

Holiness is not some lofty experience, unattainable except to those who can leap to the stars, but it is rather a lowly experience, which lowly men in the lowly walks of life can share with Jesus, by letting His mind be in them. Bless God for ever!

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