

Holiness -- How to Get It

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Holiness is a process of subtraction and addition, requiring a second work of grace and a whole-hearted consecration to God.

Scripture: Hosea 4:6, Luke 11:9-13, John 17:3, Acts 2:38-39, Romans 7:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:8-12, 1 Peter 2:1, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Holiness", "Entire Sanctification"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the necessity of understanding holiness as both a process of cleansing and a gift from God, rather than a gradual growth. He argues that entire sanctification requires an active, faith-filled effort to remove sin and embrace a holy life, which is distinct from the initial conversion experience. Brengle illustrates this through biblical examples, particularly the transformation of Peter after Pentecost, highlighting that believers can receive a clean heart through the Holy Spirit. He encourages individuals to seek this blessing wholeheartedly, assuring them that God is ready to grant it to those who earnestly ask. The sermon ultimately calls for a deeper commitment to holiness and reliance on God's power to achieve it.

Transcript

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea iv. 6).

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

Said an old professor of over eighty years, in a certain holiness meeting: "I believe in holiness; but I don't think it is all got at once, as you people say. I believe we grow into it."

This is a very common mistake, second only to that which makes death the saviour from sin and the giver of holiness, and it is one which has kept tens of thousands out of the blessed experience. It does not recognize the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. vii. 13), nor does it know the simple way of faith by which alone sin can be destroyed.

Entire sanctification is at once a process of subtraction and addition.

First, there are laid aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (1 Pet. ii. 1); in fact, every evil temper and selfish desire that is unlike Christ, and the soul is cleansed. In the

very nature of the case this cannot be by growth, for this cleansing takes something from the soul, while growth always adds something to it. The Bible says, "Now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. iii. 8). The Apostle talks as though a man were to put these off in much the same way as he would his coat. It is not by growth that a man puts off his coat, but by an active, voluntary and immediate effort of his whole body. This is subtraction.

But the Apostle adds: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. iii. 12). No more does a man put on his coat by growth, but by a similar effort of his whole body.

A man may grow in his coat, but not into his coat; he must first get it on. Just so, a man may "grow in grace," but not into grace. A man may swim in water, but not into water.

It is not by growth that you get the weeds out of your garden, but by pulling them up and vigorously using your hoe and rake.

It is not by growth that you expect that dirty little darling, who has been tumbling around with the dog and cat in the backyard, to get clean. He might grow to manhood and get dirtier every day. It is by washing and much pure water that you expect to make him at all presentable. So the Bible speaks of "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood" (Rev. i. 5). "The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John i. 7). And it is just this we sing about:

To get this blest washing I all things forgo;

Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

There is a Fountain filled with Blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins

And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Those facts were told to the old brother mentioned above, and he was asked if, after sixty years of Christian experience, he felt any nearer the priceless gift of a clean heart than when he first began to serve Christ. He honestly confessed that he did not.

He was asked if he did not think sixty years were quite long enough to prove the growth theory, if it were true. He thought they were, and so was asked to come forward and seek the blessing at once.

He did so, but did not win through that night, and the next night came forward again. He had scarcely knelt five minutes before he stood up, and, stretching out his arms, while the tears ran down his cheeks and his face glowed with Heaven's light, he cried out, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed my "transgressions from" me (Ps. ciii. 12). For some time after, he lived to witness to both small and great this wondrous grace of God in Christ, and then went in triumph to the bosom of that God whom without holiness no man can see.

"But," said a man to me, as I urged him to seek holiness at once, "I got this when I was converted. God didn't do a half work with me when He saved me. He did a thorough job."

"True, God did a thorough work, brother. When He converted you, He forgave all your sins, every one of them. He did not leave half of them unforgiven, but blotted them all out as a thick cloud to be remembered against you no more for ever. He also adopted you into His family and sent His Holy Spirit into your heart

to tell you that blessed bit of heavenly news; and that information made you feel happier than to have been told that you had fallen heir to a million dollars, or been elected governor of a state, for this made you an heir of God and a joint heir of all things with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Glory to God! It is a great thing to be converted. But, brother, are you saved from all impatience, anger and like sins of the heart? Do you live a holy life?"

"Well, you see, I don't look at this matter exactly as you do," said the man. "I do not believe we can be saved from all impatience and anger in this life." And so, when pressed to the point, he begged the question, and really contradicted his own assertion that he had got holiness when he was converted. As a friend writes, he "would rather deny the sickness than take the medicine."

The fact is, that neither the Bible nor experience proves that a man gets a clean heart when he is converted, but just the contrary. He does have his sins forgiven; he does receive the witness of adoption into God's own family; he does have his affections changed. But before he has gone very far he will find his patience mixed up with some degree of impatience, his kindness mixed with wrath, his meekness mixed with anger (which is of the heart and may not be seen of the world, but of which he is painfully conscious), his humility mixed with pride, his loyalty to Jesus mixed with a shame of the Cross, and, in fact, the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh, in greater or less degree, are all mixed up together.

But this will be done away with when he gets a clean heart, and it will take a second work of grace, preceded by a whole-hearted consecration and as definite an act of faith as that which preceded his conversion, to get it.

After conversion, he finds his old sinful nature much like a tree which has been cut down, but the stump still left. The tree causes no more bother, but the stump will still bring forth little shoots, if it is not watched. The quickest and most effective way is to put some dynamite under the stump and blow it up.

Just so, God wants to put the dynamite of the Holy Ghost (the word "dynamite" comes from the Greek word "power," in Acts i. 8) into every converted soul, and for ever do away with that old troublesome, sinful nature, so that he can truly say, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17).

This is just what God did with the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Nobody will deny that they were converted before Pentecost, for Jesus Himself had told them to "rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven" (Luke x. 20), and a man must be converted before his name is written in Heaven.

And again He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16), and this could not be said of unconverted men. So we must conclude that they were converted, yet did not have the blessing of a clean heart until the day of Pentecost.

That they did receive it there, Peter declares about as plainly as it is possible to do in Acts xv. 8, 9, where he says: "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did with us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

Before Peter got this great blessing he was filled with presumption one day and with fear the next. One day he declared that, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended ... Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee" (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35). And shortly after, when the mob came to take his Master he boldly attacked them with the sword; but in a few hours, when his blood

had cooled a little and the excitement was over, he was so frightened by a maid that he cursed and swore, and denied his Master three times.

He was like a good many soldiers, who are tremendously brave when there is a "big go" and everybody is favorable, or who can even stand an attack from persecutors, where muscle and physical courage can come to the front; but who have no moral courage to wear the uniform alone in their shop where they have to face the scorn of their mates and the jeers of the street urchin. These are soldiers who love dress parade, but do not want hard fighting at the front of the battle.

But Peter got over that on the day of Pentecost. He received the power of the Holy Ghost coming into him. He obtained a clean heart, from which perfect love had cast out all fear; and then, when shut in prison for preaching on the street and commanded by the supreme court of the land not to do so any more, he answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 19, 20). And then, just as soon as he was released, into the street he went again to preach the blessed good news of an uttermost salvation.

You could not scare Peter after that nor could he be lifted up with spiritual pride either. For one day, after he had been used of God to heal a lame man and "the people ran together ... greatly wondering," Peter saw it and said, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God ... of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus ... And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong ... yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness" (Acts iii. 12, 13, 16).

Nor did the dear old apostle have any of that ugly temper he showed when he cut off that poor fellow's ear the night Jesus was arrested, but armed himself with the mind that was in Christ (I Pet. iv. 1) and followed Him who left us an example that we should follow His steps.

"But we cannot have what Peter obtained on the day of Pentecost," wrote someone to me recently. However, Peter himself, in that great sermon which he preached that day, declared that we can, for he says: "Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you" Jews, to whom I am talking -- "and to your children," and not to you only, but "to all that are afar off" -- nineteen hundred years from now -- even as many as the Lord our God shall call," or convert (Acts ii. 38, 39).

Any child of God can have this, if he will give himself wholly to God and ask for it in faith. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find ... If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 9, 13).

Seek Him with all your heart, and you shall find Him; you shall indeed, for God says so, and He is waiting to give Himself to you.

A dear young fellow, a candidate for Salvation Army work, felt his need of a clean heart, went home from the holiness meeting, took his Bible, knelt down by his bed, read the second chapter of Acts, and then told the Lord that he would not get up from his knees till he got a clean heart, full of the Holy Ghost. He had not prayed long before the Lord came suddenly to him and filled him with the glory of God; and his face did shine, and his testimony did burn in people's hearts after that!

You can have it, if you will go to the Lord in the Spirit and with the faith of that brother; and the Lord will do for you "exceeding abundantly above all that" you "ask or think, according to the power that worketh ... in us (Eph. iii. 20).

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