

Holiness -- What Is It?

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Holiness is a state of heart and life where God is loved and trusted, and it is possible to attain this state through God's living grace in this life.

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Romans 6:6-18, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:22-24, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the necessity of holiness for entering the kingdom of heaven, citing scripture that underscores God's will for His people to be sanctified and free from sin. He explains that holiness is not about absolute perfection but rather a state of heart and life where one continually seeks to do God's will, empowered by His grace. Brengle clarifies that holiness involves perfect love, which expels all evil desires and fears, allowing believers to live in a way that pleases God. He challenges the notion that holiness can only be attained at death, asserting that it is possible to live a holy life now through faith and obedience. Ultimately, he encourages believers to embrace the transformative power of God to achieve holiness in their lives.

Transcript

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

Now, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification ... For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thess. iv. 3, 7). Without holiness, "no man can see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). Therefore, "Be ye holy!" (1 Pet. i. 16). Any one who reads his Bible in sincerity, "not handling the word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2), will see that it plainly teaches that God expects His people to be holy, and that we must be holy to be happy and useful here and to enter the kingdom of Heaven hereafter.

When once a true man is convinced that the Bible teaches these facts and that this is God's will, he will next inquire, "What is this holiness? When can I get it, and how?"

There is much difference of opinion on all these points, although the Bible is simple and plain on each one to every honest seeker after truth.

The Bible tells us that holiness is perfect deliverance from sin. "The Blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from ALL sin" (1 John 1:7). Not one bit of sin is left, for your old man is crucified with Him, "that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6), for we are "made free from sin" (Rom. vi. 18).

And we are henceforth to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 11).

The Bible also tells us that it is "perfect love," which must, in the very nature of the case, expel from the heart all hatred and every evil temper contrary to love, just as you must first empty a cup of all oil that may be in it before you can fill it with water.

Thus, holiness is a state in which there is no anger, malice, blasphemy, hypocrisy, envy, love of ease, selfish desires for good opinion of men, shame of the Cross, worldliness, deceit, debate, contention, covetousness, nor any evil desire or tendency in the heart.

It is a state in which there is no longer any doubt or fear.

It is a state in which God is loved and trusted with a perfect heart.

But though the heart may be perfect, the head may be very imperfect, and through the imperfections of his head -- of his memory, his judgment, his reason -- the holy man may make many mistakes. Yet God looks at the sincerity of his purpose, at the love and faith of his heart -- not at the imperfections of the head -- and calls him a holy man.

Holiness is not absolute perfection, which belongs to God only; nor is it angelic perfection; nor is it Adamic perfection -- for, no doubt, Adam had a perfect head as well as a perfect heart before he sinned against God. But it is Christian perfection -- such perfection and obedience of the heart as a poor fallen creature, aided by almighty power and boundless grace, can give.

It is that state of heart and life which consists in being and doing all the time -- not by fits and starts, but steadily -- just what God wants us to be and do.

Jesus said, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good" (Matt. xii. 33). Now, an apple-tree is an apple-tree all the time, and can bring forth nothing but apples. So holiness is that perfect renewal of our nature that makes us essentially good, so that we continually bring forth fruit unto God -- "the fruit of the Spirit," which "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23), with never a single work of the flesh grafted in among this heavenly fruitage.

Glory to God! It is possible, right down here, where sin and Satan have once ruined us, for the Son of God thus to transform us, by enabling us to "put off the old man" with his deeds, and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 22, 24), being "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him"

But some objector says, "Yes, all you say is true, only I don't believe we can be holy till the hour of death. The Christian life is a warfare, and we must fight the good fight of faith until we die, and then I believe God will give us dying grace."

A great many honest Christians hold exactly this view, and hence put forth no real effort to "stand perfect and complete in all the (present) will of God" (Col. iv. 12) for them. And though they pray daily, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10), yet they do not believe it is possible for them to do the will of God, and so they really make Jesus the author of a vain prayer, which it is only idle mockery to repeat.

But it is as easy for me to be and to do what God wants me to be and to do in this life, every day, as it is for Gabriel to be and do what God wants of him. If this is not so, then God is neither good nor just in His requirements of me.

God requires me to love and serve Him with all my heart, and Gabriel can do no more than that. And by God's grace it is as easy for me as for the archangel. Besides, God promises me that if I will return unto the Lord and obey His voice ... with all my heart, and with all my soul, that He will circumcise my heart ... to love Him with all my heart, and all my soul (Deut. xxx. 2, 6). And again, He promises that He would "grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke i. 74, 75).

This promise in itself ought to convince any honest soul that God means us to be holy in this life.

The good fight of faith is a fight to retain this blessing against the assaults of Satan, the fogs of doubt, and the attacks of an ignorant and unbelieving church and world.

It is not a fight against ourselves after we are sanctified, for Paul expressly declares that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 12; marginal reading).

Again, in the whole word of God, there is not one sentence to prove that this blessing is not received before death; and surely, it is only by accepting from God's hands His offered living grace that we can hope to be granted dying grace.

But the Bible declares (2 Cor. ix. 8) that "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" -- not at death but in this life, when grace is needed and where our good works are to be done.

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