

Maintaining the Holiness Standard

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Maintaining the Holiness Standard requires a deep commitment to the doctrine and experience of Heart Holiness, a reliance on the Holy Spirit, and a faithful witness to the truth and experience.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Acts 15:8-9, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 5:22-23, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:7-8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Holiness", "Spiritual Vitality"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the vital importance of maintaining the standard of holiness within The Salvation Army, which is rooted in the experiences of heart holiness and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. He articulates that the foundation of this doctrine is built on the forgiveness of sins and the sanctification of believers, urging the congregation to uphold these principles in their lives and teachings. Brengle warns that neglecting this standard could lead to spiritual decline and a loss of the Army's mission, while also calling for a commitment to prayer, scripture study, and the sharing of holiness literature. He encourages a culture of mutual support and accountability among believers to foster holiness and spiritual vitality. Ultimately, Brengle inspires his audience to embody the love and dedication to God that reflects true holiness in action.

Transcript

The Salvation Army was born, not in a cloister, nor in a drawing-room, but on a spiritual battlefield -- at the penitent-form. It has been nourished for spiritual conquests, not upon speculative doctrines and fine-spun verbal distinctions, but upon those great doctrines which can be wrought into and worked out in soul-satisfying experience. Hence, The Army compels the attention of all men everywhere and appeals to the universal heart of humanity.

And in this it is in harmony with the scientific spirit and practice of the age, which refuses to be committed to any theory which cannot be supported by facts.

One of The Army's central doctrines and most valued and precious experiences is that of Heart Holiness. The bridge which The Army throws across the impassable gulf that separates the sinner from the Saviour -- who pardons that He may purify, who saves that He may sanctify rests upon these two abutments -- the forgiveness of sins through simple, penitent, obedient faith in a crucified Redeemer, and the purifying of the heart and empowering of the soul through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, given by its risen and ascended Lord, and received not by works, but by faith.

Remove either of these abutments and the bridge falls; preserve them in strength, and a world of lost and despairing sinners can be confidently invited and urged to come and be gloriously saved.

The first abutment is deep grounded on such assurances as these: 'There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared' and 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

And the second firmly rests on such Scriptures as these: 'And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;' and 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.'

Such is the doctrine passed on to us from the first Christians, and here are some Scriptures which show how the doctrine was wrought into triumphant experience in their day: 'Know ye not,' wrote Paul, 'that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

And again he writes: 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

Such was the doctrine of the first Christians, and such was their experience; and to this doctrine and experience The Salvation Army has been committed from the beginning. This has been both its reproach and its glory, and one of the chief secrets of its world-conquering power.

Some years ago the Founder was in New York, and for nearly a week stood before the thronging multitudes by night and before his own people by day, pleading for righteousness for Holiness, for God. He seemed to me an ambassador of the Lord, standing in Christ's stead, seeking to reconcile men to his Master, and to bind to Him those who were reconciled in an unbreakable covenant of loyalty and love. And as he toiled with flaming passion to accomplish his purpose, the first great commandment began to unfold to me in fuller, richer meaning than ever before -- 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' As he poured out his heart upon us, pleading, as only he could plead, with sinners to repent and turn to God, and with us, who had done so, to be utterly devoted to Him, I said to myself, 'There is a man who loves God with all his heart.'

Then, as I considered how his whole life was being poured without stint into God's service, I said, 'There is a man who loves God with all his soul.'

Again, when I noted how diligently and with what infinite study and pains he labored to make plain the great thoughts of God to the feeblest intellect, to the most darkened and degraded, to the least intelligent of his hearers, I said, 'There is a man who loves God with all his mind.'

And, finally, when I saw him old and worn, snowy white, and burdened with the weight of many years, with great Meetings awaiting him on the morrow, and with the heavy load of a world organization ceaselessly pressing hard upon him, still toiling. praying, singing, exhorting, into the late hours of the night, that Jesus might triumph and sinners be won; when it seemed that he ought to be seeking rest in sleep, or retiring from the fight to the quiet and comfort of a pleasant home, yet wearily and heavily, but joyously pressing on, I said, 'There is a man who loves God with all his strength.'

Afflicted, oftentimes wounded and heart-sore, burdened with care, he still seemed to me to fulfill each part of that great fourfold commandment; and that, my comrades, was Holiness in action.

And it is this Holiness -- the doctrine -- the experience, the action -- that we Salvationists must maintain, otherwise we shall betray our trust; we shall lose our birthright; we shall cease to be a spiritual power in the earth; we shall have a name to live, and yet be dead; our glory will depart; and we, like Samson shorn of his locks, shall become as other men; the souls with whom we are entrusted will grope in darkness or go elsewhere for soul-nourishment and guidance; and while we may still have titles and ranks, which will have become vainglorious, to bestow upon our children, we shall have no heritage to bequeath them of martyr-like sacrifice, or spiritual power, or dare-devil faith, of pure, deep joy, of burning love, of holy triumph.

In this matter an immeasurable debt is laid upon us. We owe it to our Lord, who redeemed us by His Blood, not simply that the penalty of our sins should be remitted, and thereby we escape the just deserts of our manifold transgressions, but that we should be sanctified, made holy; that we should become temples of the Holy Ghost, and live henceforth not for our own profit or pleasure, but for His glory, as His bondservants and friends, ready for service or sacrifice, and prepared for every good work.

We owe a great debt to the cloud of witnesses -- the saintly souls who have gone before us. How shall we meet them without confusion and shame, if we neglect or waste the heritage they have left us, which they secured for us with infinite pains, with tears and prayers, with wearisome toil and oftentimes with agony and blood? What a debt we owe to them!

We owe it to our children and our children's children. They look to us for the teaching that will direct them into Full Salvation, and they will narrowly and constantly scan our lives to find in us an example of its fullness and beauty, its richness and power, its simplicity, its humility, its self-denial, its courage, its purity. unflinching constancy, and steadfast trust, its goodness and meekness, its long-suffering love, its peace and joy its patience and hope, and its deep and abiding satisfaction. How jealous we should be not to fail or disappoint them!

We must pay this righteous debt, my comrades; and we will. We must and we will maintain our Holiness standard in both our teaching and our experience, and in so doing we shall save both ourselves and them that hear thee -- those entrusted to us; this will be our glory and our joy.

But how shall we do this? It is not a simple nor an easy task. It may require the courage and devotion of a martyr. It will surely require the vigilance and prayerfulness, the wisdom and faithfulness, of a saint.

1. We must remember that the standard is not man-made, but is revealed from Heaven, and that those who experience the fullness of blessing still carry the treasure in earthen vessels; so that while we should follow them as they follow Christ, yet we must not look to them, but to Him and to His Word, for the perfect and unchangeable standard of Holiness.

Those who enter into this experience, and abide in it, are great students and lovers and seekers of God's Word, and to it they appeal when opposers arise.

Mrs. General Booth, Mother of The Salvation Army, read the Bible through eight times before she was twelve years old. Wesley said of himself: 'I am a man of one book.' Finney said: 'I never pretend to make but one book my study; I read other books occasionally, but have little time or inclination to read them much while I have so much to learn of my Bible. I find it a deep mine: the more I work it the richer it grows. We must read the Bible more than any and all other books. We must pause and pray over it, verse after verse, and compare part with part, dwell on it, digest it, and get it into our minds. till we feel that the Spirit of God has filled us with the spirit of Holiness. I have often been asked by young Converts and young men preparing for the ministry what they should read, and I answer with emphasis, "Read the Bible." I would give the answer five hundred times over and above all other things, study the Bible.'

A brainy young Soldier in New York plied me with his questionings and debatings recently, but finally he settled down to his Bible and prayer, and God sanctified him and so filled and overwhelmed him with joy that he besought the Lord to stay His hand, for the blessings and glory were more than he could endure; and he wanted to wire me four hundred miles away to tell the story.

2. Familiarity with what the Bible says, with its doctrines and standards, will avail nothing unless the teaching of the Bible is translated into conduct, into character, into life. It is not enough to know or to approve this, but with our undivided will, with our whole being, we must choose to be holy. Without the doctrine, the standard, the teaching, we shall never find the experience, or having found it, we shall be likely to lose it. Without the experience we shall neglect the teaching, we shall despise or doubt the doctrine, we shall lower the standard.

When Officers lose the experience, the Holiness Meetings languish, and when the Holiness Meetings languish the spiritual life of the Corps droops and fails, and all manner of substitutes and expedients are introduced to cover up the ghastly facts of spiritual loss, disease, and death.

3. If we are to maintain our Holiness standard we must not only know the doctrine and experience in our own hearts, but we must teach it, preach it, press it upon the people in season, out of season, until, like Paul, we can declare our faithfulness in 'warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'

Personally, I find that the surest way to get sinners saved and backsliders reclaimed, as well as the only way to get Christians sanctified, is to preach Holiness plainly, constantly, tenderly; then not only do Christians see their need and privilege, but sinners lose their self-complacency, discover their desperate condition, perceive the possibilities and joys of a true Christian life, and are inclined to surrender and be saved.

4. We shall greatly help ourselves and others if we carefully and constantly read and scatter Holiness literature, and we shall not have to go outside The Army to secure such literature. The Army has a library of books and papers on this subject, and they are plain, simple, Scriptural, and full of the thrill, passion, and compelling power of life and experience. Let us scatter these books everywhere, but especially among our Young People, urging them to read everything The Army has published on the subject.

Wesley declared that the Methodists need not hope to grow in experience unless they became a reading people; and that, surely, is the feeling of our General with regard to Salvationists, for under his direction

The Army is publishing such a library of books on experimental religion as the world has never before seen.

What stories I could tell you of the deep and glowing and abiding experiences people have entered into through the reading of Army books! Let us sow all lands deep with this literature, then we shall surely reap a harvest of great richness and prepare the way for the generation which shall come after us.

5. If we would promote the experience of Heart Holiness each of us must judge himself with all faithfulness and soberly, but we must be generous and sympathetic in our judgment of others. We must help each other. Sharp, harsh criticism does not tend to promote Holiness, and especially so when it is indulged in behind a person's back. Kindly, generous criticism which springs from love and from a desire to help, and which is preceded and followed by heart-searching and prayer that it may be offered and received in a true spirit and manner of brotherly love, will oftentimes work wonders in helping a soul. We must not cease testifying to the experience and preaching the doctrine and living the life, because others fail. We must be faithful witnesses, and we shall some day prove that our labor has not been in vain. The Devil makes war upon this doctrine and experience. Let us resist him, and he will flee.

The world will mock or turn away. Let us overcome the world by our faith. Faithfulness to this truth and experience will sometimes require of us the endurance of hardness as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ. The holy man does not live always in an ecstasy. Sometimes he passes through agony, and at such times the weakness of the flesh will test one's firmness of purpose; but we must be true, and we shall 'conquer though we die.'

I have known a Soldier who, when others have lapsed and failed, has remained clear in experience, definite in testimony, and true and generous in holy living, to become the saving salt and guiding light of a Corps. I have known a Field Officer jubilant in this experience to leaven and bless a whole Province.

We must not be fault-finding, neither must we whine and wail and dolefully lament 'the good old days ' which we may feel were better than these; but we must kneel down and pray in faith, and rise up and shout and shine and sing, and in the name of the Lord command the sun to stand still in the heavens till we have routed the Canaanites and gotten the victory. 'Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.' 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'

6. We must not forget that 'our sufficiency is of God' -- that God is interested in this work and waits to be our Helper.

We must not forget that with all our study and experience and knowledge and effort we shall fail, unless patiently, daily, hourly, we wait upon God in prayer and watchful faith for the help and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He it is that opens our eyes and the eyes of our people to see spiritual things in their true relations. He melts the heart, He bends the will, He illuminates the mind, He subdues pride, sweeps away fear, begets faith, and bestows the Blessing, and He makes the testimony, the preaching, and the written word mightily effective.

An Officer, who had lost the Blessing, attended one of my Officers' Meetings on the Continent and went away with her heart breaking after God. It was Thursday; she prayed nearly all that night. The next day, Friday, she spent reading the Bible and 'Helps to Holiness,' and crying to God for the Blessing. Saturday

she went about her duties, but with a yearning cry in her heart for the Blessing. Sunday morning came, and she was again wrestling with God, when suddenly the great deep of her soul was broken up and she was melted and flooded with light and love and peace and joy. The Holy Ghost had come, Jesus was revealed in His loveliness and power to her soul. She went to the Holiness Meeting that morning and told her experience. The Spirit fell on her Soldiers and they flocked to the penitent-form and sought and found; then they laughed and wept for joy and said this was what they had long been wanting but they knew not how to find it. It took the Holy Ghost to bring them to the experience. And His Presence was an abiding Presence with that Officer. She went on in the power of the Spirit, from the command of little struggling Corps, where she had barely held the work together, to larger and yet larger Corps, where she had sweeping victory. If space allowed I could multiply such instances.

Bless God! Our Lord still baptizes with the Holy Ghost and fire. He has given us a standard. He has given us a doctrine, and He wants to give us an experience that shall incarnate both standard and doctrine in a heavenly and all-conquering life.

A Chinaman got Full Salvation and his heathen neighbors said: 'There is no difference between him and the Book'; and that should be said of you and me and every Salvationist. God has put us in the vanguard of His hosts; the world not only looks to us for the Salvation of the lost, but the Church is far more dependent upon us than they or we suspect for the inspiration of the Spirit and the teaching of the Word that shall sanctify. God forbid that we should fail them.

Oh, my comrades, 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.' You and I live on the banks of that river. Let us lave in its waters, and then shall we be like the blessed man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is..... he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruits.'

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-logan-brengle/maintaining-the-holiness-standard/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net