

A God-Possessed Soul

by Thomas Cook

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being fully possessed by Christ for true holiness and spiritual empowerment.

Scripture: John 15:4, Romans 8:10, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:17, Philippians 4:13, Colossians 1:27, Colossians 3:3, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches about the importance of having a God-possessed soul, emphasizing the need for both the negative aspect of purging sin and the positive aspect of being filled with the life of God. He explains that Christ must dwell within us to cleanse us from indwelling sin and enable us to live a victorious life. Cook highlights that holiness is the outshining of the Divine life within us, transforming us to reflect Jesus Christ. He stresses the necessity of fully surrendering to Christ, allowing Him to possess and control every aspect of our lives for true holiness and sanctification.

Transcript

A GOD-POSSESSED SOUL

In previous chapters we have described holiness as that state of grace in which all sin is excluded from the heart, but there is always a positive as well as a negative aspect of spiritual life. This is true both of the new birth and entire sanctification. In conversion the negative aspect is pardon, the positive is regeneration, the impartation of the life of God to the soul. There are no degrees of pardon: it is full, perfect, and complete, but in the positive side perpetual increase is the order: there is "life," and "more abundant life." In like manner, while the negative aspect of holiness is the purging of the heart from all that is carnal -- and this is a full, complete and entire work, without degrees and gradualism -- there is also a positive aspect of holiness which is never separate from the negative; the one always implies the other. This positive blessing is the complete filling of the soul with the life of God. Justification is our coming to Christ; sanctification is Christ coming to us. Entire sanctification is to be entirely possessed by Christ -- so filled with His life that sin and Satan are cast out. We must not simply possess life, but the life must possess us. Sin flies before the Divine presence as darkness flies before the light. All would be darkness but for the presence of the light; and all would be sin within us but for the presence of the life.

What Thou keepest can endure; What Thou fillest, Lord, is pure, But Thy temple, void of Thee, Foul, not only frail, must be.

Some teach that the condition on which God dwells in the soul is the soul's purifying itself to receive Him; but we cannot cleanse our hearts so as to bring Christ into them; we must let Him come and cleanse them by the process of His coming, and so fit them for His own indwelling. It is the work of the great Master Himself thoroughly to purge His floor, and until He does it, it must remain defiled. But His coming, which "is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap," burns up the filthiness, purges away the dross, and makes the heart capable of His own more entire indwelling.

We are in the habit of saying that Christ saves us by His death on the cross. In an important sense this is true, but it is not the whole truth. We need Christ in us as much as we need His death for us. By dependence upon that one great past act of Christ when He died on the cross we have forgiveness, but to be cleansed from indwelling sin and to live the overcoming life we must have Christ Himself dwelling within us as a present living Saviour. It is only as we receive Him into our hearts, and in proportion as we submit to His possession and control, that the life of holiness is in any sense possible. But He offers to come to us in His person, and to become to each and all an indwelling life, which will literally reproduce in us His own purity, and enable us to live among men as He lived.

Christ speaks of Himself as abiding in His people, and of His life flowing through them as the life of the vine flows through the branches. As at the Transfiguration, where, through the thin veil of His humanity, His divinity burst forth, so is the life of holiness. It is simply the outshining of the Divine life which is within us. "Sanctity," says an old writer, "is nothing else than the life of Jesus Christ in man, whom it transforms, so to speak, by anticipation, making him to appear, even here below, in some measure what he shall be when the Lord shall come in glory." If Christ be in full possession of our hearts, it will not be long before we are doing in our poor way some of the beautiful things He would do if He were here Himself in bodily form. That He may reproduce His own life in ours is the great purpose of His indwelling, and this is the secret of holy living.

There is none holy but the Lord, and He will come and take up His abode in the center of our being, and thence purify the whole house through and through by the radiating power of His own blessed presence. As to the woman of Samaria, who asked that she might drink of the living water, the Saviour promised that the well should be in her; so to us, not His gifts but Himself will He give. If we get the Bridegroom, we shall get His possessions. How superior in permanency is the Giver over the gift! The latter may be evanescent, but the former comes to abide. "We will come," Christ said, including the Father with Himself, "and make our abode with him." This is something which the Old Testament saints never knew. God was with Abraham, Moses and Elijah; but God now dwells within the humblest of His saints who sincerely receive Him. This is the mystery hid from ages and generations: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew." "Christ made unto us of God, wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This is the great provision of the Gospel, a living personal Saviour, Christ our life.

Heathen writers speak of virtue, which means to them the repression of evil; but of holiness -- the outshining of Divine life -- they know nothing. Christianity is the only religion in the world which teaches that God dwells within men, as certainly as of old the Shekinah dwelt in the most holy place. In His earthly life, Christ said that the Father dwelt in Him so really that the words He spoke and the works He did were not His own, but His Father's. And He desires to be in us as His Father was in Him, so thinking in our thoughts, and willing in our will, and working in our actions, that we may be the channels through which He, hidden within, may pour Himself forth upon men, and that we may repeat in some small measure the life of Jesus on the earth. This is our all-sufficiency for every situation, and trial, and difficulty. In Him are

all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge and power, and when He comes to abide with us, it is like a beggar having a prince to come to live with him. He places all His resources at our disposal, and bids us draw upon Him. "According to the riches of His glory" is the measure of His supply. A king gives like a king, a God works like a God. He wants to do in us and through us something worthy of Himself. "I cannot," to the call of duty is a libel on the lips of the man who calls himself a Christian. If you cannot, Christ can, and He is in you to meet every need as it arises. "He is able to make all grace to abound towards us, so that we have a sufficiency for all emergencies, and can abound in every good work." We have no space to elaborate the thought, but as the Holy Spirit unfolds to us the wealth hidden within us now that Christ has come to our hearts, we shall be able to say, with ever-increasing confidence, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13, R.V.).

This aspect of truth makes Christ prominent, and shows what He is to us as contrasted with some attainment which might call attention to ourselves. An illustration will explain what I mean. Suppose I held in my hand a piece of iron. We will imagine that it can speak. It says, I am hard, I am cold, I am black. But we put the iron into the fire. The fire comes into it, and a wonderful transformation follows; it has not ceased to be iron, but the blackness is gone, and the coldness is gone, and the hardness is gone. It has entered into a new experience. If that iron could speak it would not glory in itself, but in the fire that keeps it a bright and glowing mass. Withdraw the fire from it, and the coldness, the hardness and the blackness begin at once to return. The fire makes the difference. So is it with the believer. Without Christ "we are carnal, and sold unto sin," like the iron, hard, cold and black; but when Christ comes to possess us we are filled with light, love and power. This transformation is more wonderful than the effect of the fire upon the iron. We enter upon a new experience, not only of emancipation from sin, but of peace, and joy and victory. But do we glory in something we have attained? We have attained nothing, Christ's indwelling makes the difference. The experience can have no existence apart from Christ Himself, so we glory in Him. It is impossible to emphasize too strongly that Christ must do all in us, just as He has already done all for us. Not that He and we are to do the work between us. Salvation is of God from beginning to end. Well might we despair if the life of holiness depended upon human strength or resources, but all the difficulties vanish when God undertakes the work. The whole ground is covered by provision and promise. Because Christ died we have life, because His life is in us we are dead to sin. It is not simply that Christ took our death, we must take His life. We receive Christ into our hearts by faith, and we keep Him there by a faith which produces holiness.

But some have Christ who are not entirely possessed by Christ. Instead of the unbroken blessedness which accompanies the perpetual realization of Christ's continuous abiding, so far as their consciousness is concerned, His visits are short and far between, and their fellowship broken and interrupted. The reason is they have never consecrated themselves fully to Christ. It is of no use for such to pray for more of God, God wants more of them. When the self-life expires, Christ will possess us fully for Himself as naturally as air rushes into a vacuum. We create the vacuum by dethroning our idols. Nearly all the delay, difficulty and danger lies at this point, unwillingness fully to surrender to Christ and to have no will of our own. Self can assert itself just as effectually in a little as in a great thing. It may be some very trifling thing that is exempted from the dominion of Christ -- some preference, some indulgence, some humiliating duty, some association to be broken, or some adornment to be discarded, but never until self is crucified can we learn the full meaning of being Christ-possessed.

We must have empty hands to grasp a whole Christ. St. Paul could never have said, "I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Alford), had self been still alive disputing with

Christ the throne of the soul. Self had been nailed to the cross, and Christ had taken the supreme place in his soul. Luther testifies to a very similar experience. "If any person knocks at the door of my heart and asks who lives here, I shall answer, Not Martin Luther, he died some time ago; Jesus Christ lives here." Just as where the self-seeking Jacob died the prevailing Israel was begotten, so from the ashes of our self-life shall come the prevailing life. It is only when the last entrenchment of self-will has been surrendered that there can be a complete resurrection unto life. But when we are ready to say, "There is nothing that would dishonor Christ that I will not forsake, nothing that would bring glory to Him which I will not render or perform; I will give myself and all I have into His hands for time and for eternity; I will follow Christ whithersoever He goes," Christ will not be long in taking full possession. With all His blessings He will enter our hearts, purging us from our evil, and so revealing Himself to our inner consciousness, that henceforth, in an unbroken line of deep calm receptiveness, we may possess, and know that we possess, an indwelling Saviour.

Do any of my readers say what those two on the way to Emmaus said to the Master, "Abide with us, abide with us"? His answer is already given, "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it, even in this poor heart of thine."

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