

Hindrances to Holiness

by William P. Nicholson

The hindrances to experiencing fullness and victory in life are often an unwillingness to renounce known sin and make a secret alliance with the enemy of God, as well as a reservation in surrender to God.

Duration: 28:33

Scripture: Acts 8:14-15

Topics: "Complete Surrender", "Personal Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of living a defeated and discontented life despite one's desire, decision, determination, and devotion to the Lord. The preacher emphasizes the importance of making a complete surrender to God, just as the Allies demanded a non-conditional surrender during the war. He compares this surrender to the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who held back part of the price they were supposed to give to God. The preacher highlights the need for restitution and making things right with others before coming to the altar. He urges the listeners to examine their lives and ensure that all debts are paid, both financial and relational.

Transcript

Acts chapter 1 verse 1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, just a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. There was no rushing mighty wind, there was just a sound from heaven.

And it filled all the house where they were sitting, that is the sound, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. I want to speak this evening to you, dear friend, on the hindrances to this baptism with the Spirit of God, or the Spirit filled, victorious, holy, sanctified, and victorious life.

In Acts chapter 8 and verse 14, when Philip had gone down here to Samaria, we read that there was a great revival broke out, and great numbers were brought to Christ and were baptized, but that is all as far as Philip could take them. And so he sent to Jerusalem, and told the disciples there about these many converts, and that they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. So Peter and James came down, Peter and John came down, and who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

And so we are told, for as yet the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. I have no doubt, dear friends, that in your life, again and again, there has come to you the yearning and the longing for a really a life of holy, satisfied, and victorious living day by day.

And you have decided again and again that this would be your blessing and your possession. And yet in spite of your deciding, and in spite of your desire, and in spite of your determination, and in spite of you making open and openly known to others as well as to yourself, the failure and defeat and dissatisfaction and discontent that has been in your heart and life since ever you've been saved. You see, dear friends, if you hadn't that and lived the way you're now living, I would question whether you'd ever been born again or not.

You cannot be born again. You cannot be born again and not know it in some degree and some measure and some constancy. And you can't be born again, dear friends, without a coming of a hatred of sin and a loathing of sin and a longing for a life of fullness and power and blessing as it's revealed in the Word of God.

You couldn't. You couldn't. Just as sure as you live, when you accepted Jesus Christ, you became a new creation, a new creature, and where you instinctively and naturally began to hate sin and wish to God you had victory over sin, and where you were irksome and where you were annoyed and disgusted at the fact of your defeat and failure day in and day out.

These are evidences of the new nature. These are the evidences that you're a new creature. If anybody can tell you that they're just as much fun and just as much feeling of content in a picture show as they have in a prayer meeting, they're just revealing that they're still children of the devil and never have been born again.

When you're born again, you become a new creation, a new creature altogether, and old things pass away and old things become new. You believe that, dear friend, and you felt that, and you've struggled on maybe for days and for weeks and months, aye, and probably years. You've struggled on and tried to do your best to deliver decent respectable Christian life that you wouldn't be ashamed of and that would be a blessing to those you know and those you meet, and yet in spite of it all, you seem defeated and nothing but failure resulting of your decision again and again.

You've gone to conventions and you've gone to holiness meetings and you've gone to conferences and Catholic conventions and you've really longed and yearned and cried, aye, and prayed as well as desired that this blessing might be yours. You've even put your feet upon the neck of your own, on your own nervousness and your own shyness and you've made a public spectacle of yourself by going down through a meeting and kneeling down at the altar confessing your defeat and failure as a Christian and your yearning for this life of fullness. And someone has instructed you and someone has prayed for you and prayed with you and you've prayed yourself and yet some way or another.

After it's all over, it hasn't been long till you're back into the old kind of up and down defeated life again. Now there must be a reason for all this, dear friend. You couldn't, you couldn't, you couldn't get fire without heat, you couldn't get frost and snow and ice without cold, and you couldn't make two and two anything else but four.

These are facts, says the Scots, that that canny didn't. And here's facts in your life of the defeat and failure in spite of your desire, in spite of your decision, in spite of your determination, in spite of your praying and yearning and longing, here you are still living a life discontented, defeated and although devoted to your Lord. There must be a reason for it.

And so dear friend, today I want to help you lovingly and kindly and yet as plain as I know how and as personal as I could possibly make it, I want to try and help you this evening. You'll not turn away and feel angry and disgusted because I'm speaking to you as if there was nobody else and I'm revealing to you facts that you know although they may have been hidden to your mind and heart within your heart. You'll not be annoyed.

If a young boy comes with a telegram to you and it's bringing bad news, you don't begin to kick the messenger, do you? And if I'm bringing to you, it's not bad news I'm bringing, but it'll be bad news in the sense that these things have been there and hindering your fullness and blessing and maybe it does annoy you to hear about it and to think about it. Dear friend, don't let it be that way. May you be humbled and broken before the Word of God and may you really confess your need and to reveal in the letter what God reveals that hinders, accept it, renounce it and have done with it and come into a life of fullness and satisfaction that'll be a joy to your own heart, a pleasure to God, pleasing God as you walk along and a means of blessing in your day and generation.

Now you'll find, dear friends, that if you're still in that life of defeat and failure in spite of all your willingness and all your effort to try and live a different kind of life, you'll find that it's caused many a time and first of all by an unwillingness on your part to have done with all known, known sin. Now let me repeat that to you again, an unwillingness to have done with all known sin, known sin. You can't have done what you've done with all sin that you don't know anything about, but known sin.

You'll find that whenever those who are seeking fullness of blessing and longing for a life of holiness and victory, you'll find that there is something there in the heart and life that they're unwilling to renounce and to have done with. It's just like a big Goliath in the midst of the children of Israel and then you go out there again and again and again and again, you've come to this point of determination and desire and that thing has faced you and you've failed to go through with it. Not willing to have done with it.

I don't know what your Goliath may be, I don't know the nature of it, but dear friends, there's something in there that is hindering you. You're unwilling to let that one particular thing go. It may be a besetting sin, it may be a kind of an idol of something that you roll under your tongue or something that brings pleasure and delight to you or something that brings profit to you in your life, but there it is and you know that that thing is in there, a known thing and it has been there every time you've come to the altar and have faced this thing, that thing has come up and you've never turned your back on it.

The Lord says in his word, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Now many years the Lord said, if we commit iniquity, he'll never hear it. No, he'd never hear it at all.

But when it's regard for iniquity in the heart, it isn't that you have any willingness or delight in it, but you regard you may be frightened of it. You say, well, now I've tried in vain and I've only made a mess. I've tried to give it up, I've tried to do the right, I've tried to get the wrong rated and you've just failed every time.

And there's an inward regard there caused by fear that you'd make a mess of it. You've tried in vain and you made a mess of it. You've tried again and again and you've made a mess of it.

And so you say, well, there is that thing. I'm willing to give up everything and I've done with everything. But this one thing, this besetting sin that there is in my heart in life, it doesn't seem possible.

So particular, personal, private sin in the heart and life. Some filthiness and sexual thing in the life that is caused like a bloody flux in your Christian testimony. And in spite of all that you want and you desire, that thing remains and you're not willing to take sides with God against it.

Well, dear friend, until the crack of doom, your prayer will never be heard. You'll never get out of your bondage, failure and fear until that thing is settled between you and God. And that you'll take sides with God in that thing, whatever shape or form it may be and say, by the grace and power of God, I renounce it and have done with it forever from this moment.

Until you get there, dear friend, you'll never get towards the life of fullness and victory. How can you expect God to answer your cry and bring you into deliverance and victory while you have a secret sympathetic alliance with the very enemy of God? You've entered into a secret alliance with that thing. You make a continual allowance for the thing.

Whenever it crops up, you say, all right, I'm defeated. I've tried. I couldn't give it up.

I've tried, but I couldn't do it. And the thing is cropped in there and you've entered into a secret alliance with that thing and you make continual allowance of it. You'll never get anywhere, dear friend.

Is there any sin that Jesus Christ has not died to atone for? Is there any temptation that has overcome Jesus Christ and that he's not able to give you any victory over? Is there any sin in your heart and life and mind that we know of that Jesus Christ couldn't break the power of and set us free from? My, it's a terrible thing. Why entering into an alliance with this thing and making allowance for it? How could we expect that God would hear? How could we expect any deliverance from it when we're into a secret sympathy and alliance with this accursed thing? You may have been inherited a kind of a violent temper and you say, here it is and I've tried again and certainly you have, but it doesn't mean that Jesus Christ can't control that temper. There's nothing wrong with a temper.

It's the uncontrolling of it and you, he knows right well and you know that you can't control it, but you're not willing to let him get a chance of it. If you take your sides with it and say, I'm defeated, failure in the face of it, but I believe Jesus Christ can conquer it in my life and I now have done with it and I take sides with Christ against it. Until you get there, dear friends, you'll never get anywhere else and you'll never know anything else but a life of defeat and failure day in and day out.

You could never get God to take sides with you against your sin. You never can. God never forgives sin.

A holy God couldn't forgive sin. God hates sin. God abhors sin.

God punishes sin and God says he'll blood it out and bury it in hell with the devil and these angels for all eternity. Why, if God could have any time of ever forgiven sin, it was when Jesus Christ on the cross was made sin. He wasn't a sinner, but he was made sin.

He was made sin and when God saw sin on his dear son, he turned his back on him and left him, cursed him and Jesus died crying out, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And do you imagine, dear friends, that you could get God to forgive sin and to make an allowance for it in your life and enter into you with a sympathy about the matter? God abhors, God hates sin and if you take your sides with God against it and

have done with it altogether, glory to God, you're not far from the blessing and so you'll find that many are kept out of this blessing. They've prayed and they've been desiring it, they've decided for it, they've made confession of it and yet nothing has come of it simply because there was an unwillingness for some one particular sin. There may be five thousand others, but one particular sin, if you could drop the sun out of the solar system, everything would collapse and if that one particular thing, dear friend, that you know, that one personal particular thing, if you're willing to have done with that and get that thing settled, glory to God, everything, every other sin will be settled too.

Well, I can imagine you saying, all right, Lord, I take sides with thee against every known sin. I make no allowance for anything along that line. I enter into no secret sympathy or allowance for it.

Lord, I take sides with thee and claim thy victory over. That's the first step and until you get there, dear friend, you'll never get any further. But I've seen people get the sin question settled and get to the place where they really have taken sides with God against sin, this sin that they know of.

And yet, why have they not entered into this victory? Another hindrance is this, there is a reservation in our surrender to the Lord. You remember Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter five, Acts chapter five, you remember how Ananias and Sapphira, they came before Peter and those in the church and a certain man named Ananias and Sapphira with his wife sold the possession. Now, that wasn't wrong.

They had a right to the possession, they had a right to sell it. But here's where the thing is wrong. They promised God that they'd make a covenant with God and give this to him, evidently, and kept that part of the price, his wife also being privy in it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostle's feet.

You see, it was just a part instead of all. And Peter said to Ananias, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and keep back part of the price? And friend, you'll generally find that when we're seeking this fullness of blessing, and we get done honestly and fully as far as we know how with this sin question settled that between you and God. Now there comes this matter of surrender.

The Lord demands a complete unconditional surrender. There's no terms of any kind or condition of any kind allowed. It's got to be a complete and non-conditional surrender.

You remember during the last war there that we allies got in with our enemies and the one slogan of all the battles and the slogan of all the days of that war, a non-conditional surrender. Well, that's just exactly, dear friend, what the Lord demands. You see, you're not your own anyhow.

When you accepted Christ, you were bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And if he hasn't possession of all he purchased, you're robbing God. You're robbing God.

You're playing the game of Ananias and Sapphira. You've kept back, you've given something, but you've kept back part of the price. You've given a good many things up, and you've given yourself in a certain way up, and you've given other things up, but you haven't kept the whole surrender.

You haven't made the entire surrender. You've kept back part of the price. And friend, as you get to the altar, you know when you get there what it is that keeps you back in that attitude of surrender.

When thou comest to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come, and then come, and offer thy gift. It's got to be a non-conditional surrender. What was it cropped up whenever you made it, whenever you got to the altar? And when you

got through and got to the place where you all sinned, questioned, or settled, what was the next thing that faced you? Something on your part that you're unwilling to have done with.

Some grudge or bitterness that you had in your heart towards some other believer. Some act of restitution that you'd got to make. Some bad debt away back yonder many years back that you had never made, never made.

When you left the old town away back there, you left the debt behind. And you've never, you've never, never made that thing right. And now as you come before the altar, that thing springs up to your mind, right before you.

And there's where the surrender begins. There's where the fighting begins. There's where the struggle takes place.

That's what old Jacob had yonder, at Jabbok. All night he wrestled with, he wrestled with the angel. Why? Because he had to make restitution to his brother of whom he had robbed and wronged long as there thirty years before.

And friend, as you get to the altar tonight, what is it that crops up? When thou comest to the altar, am there remembered. What are you remembering in there? Some debt that's got to be paid. Has your grocer been paid? Has your butcher been paid? Has your tailor been paid? Has your doctor been paid? Let me ask you, have you paid God? You remember you made a vow to God to give you a tithing, that you'd give one-tenth of your two shillings out of every pound.

You'd lay that on the altar and let that belong to God. Everything belongs to God. But you made a covenant with God, and God made a covenant with you regarding the tithing, regarding the tenth, regarding two shillings out of the pound.

And it went on for a time, and then you began to prosper, and the tithes began to look big, and Satan entered your heart, and you began to rob God. And now as you come to the altar, now as you come to the altar, it crops up to your memory. Until that thing is settled, dear friend, your surrender will never be entire and complete.

I remember in a country we were in, talking along this line one Sunday afternoon in a large audience. A big businessman there had been a Christian and was a Christian, but living a life of defeat and prison. And whenever he got on Monday to his office, he said to his secretary, I want you to turn up the books and find out when I stopped tithing, when I stopped giving God two shillings to the pound as I covenanted.

And whenever they found out for certain years, and he made out the check for the whole bunch and got it settled, then he got the surrender question settled. Will a man rob God? Yes, says God, you've robbed me with tithes as well as offerings. And bring me all the tithes, every bit of it, bring it all, go right back to where you robbed God, bring all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me, says God, give me a chance, and see whether I'll not baptize and fill and flood you with the Holy Ghost.

Maybe it is that there's something that's happened between you and one of your relatives. Some of them has wronged you, wronged you of your estate, wronged you that was of yours in your, in the will of your parents, and you felt a bitterness towards them. You felt a root of bitterness cropping up in you.

I'm not making light to the wrong they've done, but what's hurt you is that you've allowed bitterness to come in, like a root there within your heart. And friend, when thou comest to the altar and there, remember that thy brother, that's got to be settled there between you and that brother, somewhere or another, sometime or another. There has got to be, there's got to be that reconciliation made.

There's got to be that restitution made. You've got to get these things settled as you come before the Lord. You hear some say, well, all you've got to do is receive by faith.

That's all right, but dear friend, you've got to put the wrongs right, you've got to make them right, if you're going to know this life, if you're going to know this act of full surrender. And then I've seen them get the sin question settled, and the surrender question settled, and still not, not through. You'll find that it's disobedience to life that has come.

The Lord has revealed something in the heart and life that's got to be rectified and remedied. And you see, you've kicked against it, you've rebelled against it, you've sworn that you'd never have to, would never do it, or wouldn't make it. Well, you'll never get any farther, dear friends.

That thing's got to be settled, whatever it is. You've got to make it right with God, and you've got to be right with your fellow man, if you're going to know this life of fullness of blessing. And then again, others are kept from this blessing by impurity of motives.

You remember old Simon the sorcerer, he said, give me this blessing, so that I may do just exactly as the apostles have done. And you may want it for the sake of notoriety, or the sake of success in your ambition, or the sake of this, that, or the other. And while that impurity is there, you'll never get any further in it.

There's got to be that the Spirit of God would crucify self and glorify Christ. And until that's so, you'll never get any further. But I've seen them even getting that further.

Settling the sin question. Settling this surrender question. Settling this reconciliation question, business.

And restitution. And getting the motive settled, where God alone was to be glorified and Christ pre-eminently in the heart and life. And yet they failed.

Why? Because they were ignorant, they were ignorant of God's life of faith, and God's giving by faith. They wanted some tongues, they wanted to spasm up their back bone. They wanted some kind of a glorified fit, they wanted some kind of a strange transcendental experience.

They wanted some feeling, some kind of a vision or another. Friend, you've got to take it by faith and leave to God what the feeling will be, and what the experience will be, and what the nature of that will be, and when that will be. But you've got to come by simple faith.

I take the promised Holy Ghost, the power of Pentecost, to fill me now to the uttermost. I take, He undertakes, and glory to God as He does. Blessing will be yours, and you'll know the joy and fullness of it day in and day out.

Search me, O God, my actions try, and let my life appear as seen by thine all searching eye, to mine my ways make clear. Search all my sense and all my heart, who only can make known, and let the deep and hidden part to me be fully known. Throw light into the darkened cells where passion reigns within, quicken my conscience till it feels the loathsomeness of sin.

Search all my thoughts, the secret motives that control, the chambers where polluted things hold empire over my soul. Search till thy fiery glance has cast its holy light through all, and I by grace am brought at last before thy face to fall. Thus prostrate I shall learn of thee what now I feebly prove, that God alone in Christ can be unutterable love.

O friend, don't be frightened to come to the Lord. He's not a policeman. He's not here with a club in His hand.

He doesn't come to tease and torment. He doesn't bring these things up that we might be annoyed and disturbed. No, He wants to get us right, right from the very heart out, past, present, and future, so that we may walk with God, as Enoch walked with God, in the light as he is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleansing us from all sin.

I remember whenever I was seeking this blessing, dear friends, I got awful fear, frightened of God. Things began to crop up. Things of a past that needed to be rectified and put right began to crop up, and my, my, what fear filled my heart, and how I was accepting the lies of the devil, when he was saying, God's a monster, God's a tyrant, God's a harsh master, seeking where He has not sown, and then gathering where He has not strawed, and I had this hard, hard feeling in the mind for a time in my heart.

I thought that God was teasing and tormenting me about these things. I went to an old Christian, an older Christian that might have known better. You want to watch who you go to when you come about these things, and I said, brother, I'm in trouble.

I want a life that's holy, the Lord's, and sanctified, and baptized, and filled by the Holy Ghost, and I said, in spite of my prayers and desires, it doesn't seem, doesn't, anything seem to happen. I said, would you tell me what, and I said, the, the things begin to crop up in the part life that I can't, that I, that I can't get away with, and it comes away back, it happened away back years and years ago. Oh, he says, Nicholson, he says, why that's the devil tormenting, tormenting a, a, a sensitive conscience.

Man do you know that suited me for a time, but it didn't give me any peace. When I got down before the throne and before the Lord, that thing cropped up again, until at last, with confession, and restitution, and making amends, I got right with them, and then right with God. Now, dear friend, whatever it is that's coming in, if it's something, sin that you're indulging in, if it's a lack of full surrender on your part, because of your fear of letting everything go.

If it's something there that's got to be rectified, God has put his finger on something that you know is wrong. Or is it that the wrong motives are cropped in there? You want to be brave and open and Bible student and a great preacher and a great soul winner. Something or another wrong might land.

Or maybe it's just that you're not willing to take in simple faith the gift that Jesus Christ offers. God's gift to the world was the unspeakable gift of Christ. And Christ's gift to you, the church, is the Holy Spirit.

And you're not willing to take. Oh, dear friend, just now as you are, lay everything aside. Get right with God about everything from beginning to end.

And right now, Lord, I take the promised Holy Ghost. I take the power of Pentecost to fill me now to uttermost. I take, he undertakes.

And glory to God, he will.

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