

[CHAPTER FROM]
HOLINESS.

BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON ITS NATURE, HINDRANCES, DIFFICULTIES AND ROOTS.

BY

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III HOLINESS

“*Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*”—HEB. xii. 14.

THE text which heads this page opens up a subject of deep importance. That subject is practical holiness. It suggests a question which demands the attention of all professing Christians—Are we holy? Shall we see the Lord?

That question can never be out of season. The wise man tells us, “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh—a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccles. iii. 4, 7); but there is no time, no, not a day, in which a man ought not to be holy. Are we?

That question concerns all ranks and conditions of men. Some are rich and some are poor—some learned and some unlearned—some masters, and some servants; but there is no rank or condition in life in which a man ought not to be holy. Are we?

I ask to be heard to-day about this question. How stands the account between our souls and God? In this hurrying, bustling world, let us stand still for a few minutes and consider the matter of holiness. I believe I might have chosen a subject more popular and pleasant. I am sure I might have found one more easy to handle. But I feel deeply I could not have chosen one more seasonable and more profitable to our souls. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. xii. 14.)

I shall endeavour, by God’s help, to examine what true holiness is, and the reason why it is so needful. In conclusion, I shall try to point out the only way in which holiness can be attained. I have already, in the second paper in this volume, approached this subject from a doctrinal side. Let me now try to present it to my readers in a more plain and practical point of view.

I. First, then, let me try to show *what true practical holiness is—what sort of persons are those whom God calls holy.*

A man may go great lengths, and yet never reach true holiness. It is not knowledge—Balaam had that: nor great profession—Judas Iscariot had that: nor doing many things—Herod had that: nor zeal for certain matters in religion—Jehu had that: nor morality and outward respectability of conduct—the young ruler had that: nor taking pleasure in hearing preachers—the Jews in Ezekiel’s time had that: nor keeping company with godly people—Joab and Gehazi and Demas had that. Yet none of these was holy! These things alone are not holiness. A man may have any one of them, and yet never see the Lord.

What then is true practical holiness? It is a hard question to answer. I do not mean that there is any want of Scriptural matter on the subject. But I fear lest I should give a defective view of holiness, and not say all that ought to be said; or lest I should say things about it that ought not to be said, and so do harm. Let me, however, try to draw a picture of holiness, that we may see it clearly before the eyes of our minds. Only let it never be forgotten, when I have said all, that my account is but a poor imperfect outline at the best.

(a) Holiness is *the habit of being of one mind with God*, according as we find His

mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment—hating what He hates—loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.

(b) A holy man will *endeavour to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment*. He will have a decided bent of mind toward God, a hearty desire to do His will—a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love to all His ways. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. vii. 22), and what David felt when he said, "I esteem *all* Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate *every* false way." (Psalm cxix. 128.)

(c) A holy man will *strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ*. He will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also labour to have the mind that was in Him, and to be "conformed to His image." (Rom. viii. 29.) It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us—to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not Himself—to walk in love, even as Christ loved us—to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation and humbled Himself. He will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth—that He came not to do His own will—that it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will—that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others—that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults—that He thought more of godly poor men than of kings—that He was full of love and compassion to sinners—that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin—that He sought not the praise of men, when He might have had it—that He went about doing good—that He was separate from worldly people—that He continued instant in prayer—that He would not let even His nearest relations stand in His way when God's work was to be done. These things a holy man will try to remember. By them he will endeavour to shape his course in life. He will lay to heart the saying of John, "He that saith he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6); and the saying of Peter, that "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.) Happy is he who has learned to make Christ his "all," both for salvation and example! Much time would be saved, and much sin prevented, if men would oftener ask themselves the question, "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?"

(d) A holy man will follow after *meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, kind tempers, government of his tongue*. He will bear much, forbear much, overlook much, and be slow to talk of standing on his rights. We see a bright example of this in the behaviour of David when Shimei cursed him—and of Moses when Aaron and Miriam spake against him. (2 Sam. xvi. 10; Num. xii. 3)

(e) A holy man will follow after *temperance and self-denial*. He will labour to mortify the desires of his body—to crucify his flesh with his affections and lusts—to curb his passions—to restrain his carnal inclinations, lest at any time they break loose. Oh, what a word is that of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life" (Luke xxi. 34); and that of the Apostle Paul, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 27.)

(f) A holy man will follow after *charity and brotherly kindness*. He will endeavour to observe the golden rule of doing as he would have men do to him, and speaking as he would have men speak to him. He will be full of affection towards his brethren—towards their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, their souls. “He that loveth another,” says Paul, “hath fulfilled the law.” (Rom. xiii. 8.) He will abhor all lying, slandering, back-biting, cheating, dishonesty, and unfair dealing, even in the least things. The shekel and cubit of the sanctuary were larger than those in common use. He will strive to adorn his religion by all his outward demeanour, and to make it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all around him. Alas, what condemning words are the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the Sermon on the Mount, when laid alongside the conduct of many professing Christians!

(g) A holy man will follow after a spirit of *mercy and benevolence towards others*. He will not stand all the day idle. He will not be content with doing no harm—he will try to do good. He will strive to be useful in his day and generation, and to lessen the spiritual wants and misery around him, as far as he can. Such was Dorcas, “full of good works and almsdeeds, which she did,”—not merely purposed and talked about, *but did*. Such an one was Paul: “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,” he says, “though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved.” (Acts ix. 36; 2 Cor. xii. 15.)

(h) A holy man will follow after *purity of heart*. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows his own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who shall dare to talk of strength when David can fall? There is many a hint to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only *touched* a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, became at once unclean in the sight of God. And these things were emblems and figures. Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point.

(i) A holy man will follow after *the fear of God*. I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because he is afraid of punishment, and would be idle if he did not dread discovery. I mean rather the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move as if he was always before his father’s face, because he loves him. What a noble example Nehemiah gives us of this! When he became Governor at Jerusalem he might have been chargeable to the Jews and required of them money for his support. The former Governors had done so. There was none to blame him if he did. But he says, “So did not I, because of the fear of God.” (Nehem. v. 15.)

(j) A holy man will follow after *humility*. He will desire, in lowliness of mind, to esteem all others better than himself. He will see more evil in his own heart than in any other in the world. He will understand something of Abraham’s feeling, when he says, “I am dust and ashes;” —and Jacob’s, when he says, “I am less than the least of all Thy mercies;”—and Job’s, when he says, “I am vile;”—and Paul’s, when he says, “I am chief of sinners.” Holy Bradford, that faithful martyr of Christ, would sometimes finish his letters with these words, “A most miserable sinner, John Bradford.” Good old Mr. Grimshaw’s last words, when he lay on his death-bed, were these, “Here goes an unprofitable servant.”

(k) A holy man will follow after *faithfulness in all the duties and relations in life*. He will try, not merely to fill his place as well as others who take no thought for their

souls, but even better, because he has higher motives, and more help than they. Those words of Paul should never be forgotten, “Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord,”—“Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” (Col. iii. 23; Rom. xii. 11.) Holy persons should aim at doing everything well, and should be ashamed of allowing themselves to do anything ill if they can help it. Like Daniel, they should seek to give no “occasion” against themselves, except “concerning the law of their God.” (Dan. vi. 5.) They should strive to be good husbands and good wives, good parents and good children, good masters and good servants, good neighbours, good friends, good subjects, good in private and good in public, good in the place of business and good by their firesides. Holiness is worth little indeed, if it does not bear this kind of fruit. The Lord Jesus puts a searching question to His people, when He says, “What do ye more than others?” (Matt. v. 47.)

(*I*) Last, but not least, a holy man will follow after *spiritual mindedness*. He will endeavour to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is; but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim travelling to his home. To commune with God in prayer, in the Bible, and in the assembly of His people—these things will be the holy man’s chiefest enjoyments. He will value every thing and place and company, just in proportion as it draws him nearer to God. He will enter into something of David’s feeling, when he says, “My soul followeth hard after Thee.” “Thou art my portion.” (Psalm lxxiii. 8; cxix. 57.)

Such is the outline of holiness which I venture to sketch out. Such is the character which those who are called “holy” follow after. Such are the main features of a holy man.

But here let me say, I trust no man will misunderstand me. I am not without fear that my meaning will be mistaken, and the description I have given of holiness will discourage some tender conscience. I would not willingly make one righteous heart sad, or throw a stumbling-block in any believer’s way.

I do not say for a moment that holiness shuts out the presence of indwelling sin. No: far from it. It is the greatest misery of a holy man that he carries about with him a “body of death;”—that often when he would do good “evil is present with him”; that the old man is clogging all his movements, and, as it were, trying to draw him back at every step he takes. (Rom. vii. 21.) But it is the excellence of a holy man that he is not at peace with indwelling sin, as others are. He hates it, mourns over it, and longs to be free from its company. The work of sanctification within him is like the wall of Jerusalem—the building goes forward “even in troublous times.” (Dan. ix. 25.)

Neither do I say that holiness comes to ripeness and perfection all at once, or that these graces I have touched on must be found in full bloom and vigour before you can call a man holy. No: far from it. Sanctification is always *a progressive work*. Some men’s graces are in the blade, some in the ear, and some are like full corn in the ear. All must have a beginning. We must never despise “the day of small things.” And sanctification in the very best is an *imperfect work*. The history of the brightest saints that ever lived will contain many a “but,” and “howbeit,” and “notwith-

standing,” before you reach the end. The gold will never be without some dross—the light will never shine without some clouds, until we reach the heavenly Jerusalem. The sun himself has spots upon his face. The holiest men have many a blemish and defect when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Their life is a continual warfare with sin, the world, and the devil; and sometimes you will see them not overcoming, but overcome. The flesh is ever lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and “in many things they offend all.” (Gal. v. 17; James iii. 2.)

But still, for all this, I am sure that to have such a character as I have faintly drawn, is the heart’s desire and prayer of all true Christians. They press towards it, if they do not reach it. They may not attain to it, but they always aim at it. It is what they strive and labour to be, if it is not what they are.

And this I do boldly and confidently say, that true holiness is a great *reality*. It is something in a man that can be seen, and known, and marked, and felt by all around him. It is light: if it exists, it will show itself. It is salt: if it exists, its savour will be perceived. It is a precious ointment: if it exists, its presence cannot be hid.

I am sure we should all be ready to make allowance for much backsliding, for much occasional deadness in professing Christians. I know a road may lead from one point to another, and yet have many a winding and turn; and a man may be truly holy, and yet be drawn aside by many an infirmity. Gold is not the less gold because mingled with alloy, nor light the less light because faint and dim, nor grace the less grace because young and weak. But after every allowance, I cannot see how any man deserves to be called “holy,” who wilfully allows himself in sins, and is not humbled and ashamed because of them. I dare not call anyone “holy” who makes a habit of wilfully neglecting known duties, and wilfully doing what he knows God has commanded him not to do. Well says Owen, “I do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow. and trouble.”

Such are the leading characteristics of practical holiness. Let us examine ourselves and see whether we are acquainted with it. Let us prove our own selves.

II. Let me try, in the next place, *to show some reasons why practical holiness is so important.*

Can holiness save us? Can holiness put away sin—cover iniquities—make satisfaction for transgressions—pay our debt to God? No: not a whit. God forbid that I should ever say so. Holiness can do none of these things. The brightest saints are all “unprofitable servants.” Our purest works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God’s holy law. The white robe which Jesus offers, and faith puts on, must be our only righteousness—the name of Christ our only confidence—the Lamb’s book of life our only title to heaven. With all our holiness we are no better than *sinners*. Our best things are stained and tainted with imperfection. They are all more or less incomplete, wrong in the motive or defective in the performance. By the deeds of the law shall no child of Adam ever be justified. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephes. ii. 8, 9.)

Why then is holiness so important? Why does the Apostle say, “Without it no man shall see the Lord”? Let me set out in order a few reasons.

(a) For one thing, we must be holy, because *the voice of God in Scripture plainly*

commands it. The Lord Jesus says to His people, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. v. 20.) “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. v. 48.) Paul tells the Thessalonians, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (1 Thess. iv. 3.) And Peter says, “As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter i. 15, 16.) “In this,” says Leighton, “law and Gospel agree.”

(b) We must be holy, because this is one grand *end and purpose for which Christ came into the world.* Paul writes to the Corinthians, “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” (2 Cor. v. 15.) And to the Ephesians, “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it.” (Ephes. v. 25, 26.) And to Titus, “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus ii. 14.) In short, to talk of men being saved from the guilt of sin, without being at the same time saved from its dominion in their hearts, is to contradict the witness of all Scripture. Are believers said to be elect?—it is “through sanctification of the Spirit.” Are they predestinated?—it is “to be conformed to the image of God’s Son.” Are they chosen?—it is “that they may be holy.” Are they called?—it is “with a holy calling.” Are they afflicted?—it is that they may be “partakers of holiness.” Jesus is a complete Saviour. He does not merely take away the guilt of a believer’s sin, He does more—He breaks its power. (1 Peter i. 2; Rom. viii. 29; Eph. i. 4; Heb. xii. 10.)

(c) We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Twelfth Article of our Church says truly, that “Although good works cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by its fruits.” James warns us there is such a thing as a dead faith—a faith which goes no further than the profession of the lips, and has no influence on a man’s character. (James ii. 17.) True saving faith is a very different kind of thing. True faith will always show itself by its fruits—it will sanctify, it will work by love, it will overcome the world, it will purify the heart. I know that people are fond of talking about death-bed evidences. They will rest on words spoken in the hours of fear, and pain, and weakness, as if they might take comfort in them about the friends they lose. But I am afraid in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred such evidences are not to be depended on. I suspect that, with rare exceptions, men die just as they have lived. The only safe evidence that we are one with Christ, and Christ in us, is holy life. They that live unto the Lord are generally the only people who die in the Lord. If we would die the death of the righteous, let us not rest in slothful desires only; let us seek to live His life. It is a true saying of Traill’s, “That man’s state is naught, and his faith unsound, that find not his hopes of glory purifying to his heart and life.”

(d) We must be holy, because this is the *only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* This is a point on which He has spoken most plainly, in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John. “If ye love Me, keep my commandments.”—

“He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me.”—“If a man love Me he will keep my words.”—“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John xiv. 15, 21, 23; xv. 14.)—Plainer words than these it would be difficult to find, and woe to those who neglect them! Surely that man must be in an unhealthy state of soul who can think of all that Jesus suffered, and yet cling to those sins for which that suffering was undergone. It was sin that wove the crown of thorns—it was sin that pierced our Lord’s hands, and feet, and side—it was sin that brought Him to Gethsemane and Calvary, to the cross and to the grave. Cold must our hearts be if we do not hate sin and labour to get rid of it, though we may have to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye in doing it.

(e) We must be holy, because this is the *only sound evidence that we are true children of God*. Children in this world are generally like their parents. Some, doubtless, are more so, and some less—but it is seldom indeed that you cannot trace a kind of family likeness. And it is much the same with the children of God. The Lord Jesus says, “If ye were Abraham’s children ye would do the works of Abraham.”—“If God were your Father ye would love Me.” (John viii. 39, 42.) If men have no likeness to the Father in heaven, it is vain to talk of their being His “sons.” If we know nothing of holiness we may flatter ourselves as we please, but we have not got the Holy Spirit dwelling in us: we are dead, and must be brought to life again—we are lost, and must be found. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they,” and they only, “are the sons of God.” (Rom. viii. 14.) We must show by our lives the family we belong to.—We must let men see by our good conversation that we are indeed the children of the Holy One, or our son-ship is but an empty name. “Say not,” says Gurnall, “that thou hast royal blood in thy veins, and art born of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy.”

(f) We must be holy, because this is the *most likely way to do good to others*. We cannot live to ourselves only in this world. Our lives will always be doing either good or harm to those who see them. They are a silent sermon which all can read. It is sad indeed when they are a sermon for the devil’s cause, and not for God’s. I believe that far more is done for Christ’s kingdom by the holy living of believers than we are at all aware of. There is a reality about such living which makes men feel, and obliges them to think. It carries a weight and influence with it which nothing else can give. It makes religion beautiful, and draws men to consider it, like a lighthouse seen afar off. The day of judgment will prove that many besides husbands have been won “*without the word*” by a holy life. (1 Pet. iii. i.) You may talk to persons about the doctrines of the Gospels, and few will listen, and still fewer understand. But your life is an argument that none can escape. There is a meaning about holiness which not even the most unlearned can help taking in. They may not understand justification, but they can understand charity.

I believe there is far more harm done by unholy and inconsistent Christians than we are aware of. Such men are among Satan’s best allies. They pull down by their lives what ministers build with their lips. They cause the chariot wheels of the Gospel to drive heavily. They supply the children of this world with a never ending excuse for remaining as they are.—“I cannot see the use of so much religion,” said an irreligious tradesman not long ago; “I observe that some of my customers are always talking about the Gospel, and faith, and election, and the blessed promises, and so forth; and

yet these very people think nothing of cheating me of pence and half-pence, when they have an opportunity. Now, if religious persons can do such things, I do not see what good there is in religion.”—I grieve to be obliged to write such things, but I fear that Christ’s name is too often blasphemed because of the lives of Christians. Let us take heed lest the blood of souls should be required at our hands. From murder of souls by inconsistency and loose walking, good Lord, deliver us! Oh, for the sake of others, if for no other reason, let us strive to be holy!

(g) We must be holy, *because our present comfort depends much upon it*. We cannot be too often reminded of this. We are sadly apt to forget that there is a close connection between sin and sorrow, holiness and happiness, sanctification and consolation. God has so wisely ordered it, that our well-being and our well-doing are linked together. He has mercifully provided that even in this world it shall be man’s *interest* to be holy. Our justification is not by works—our calling and election are not according to our works—but it is vain for anyone to suppose that he will have a lively *sense* of his justification, or an *assurance* of his calling, so long as he neglects good works, or does not strive to live a holy life. “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”—“Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts.” (1 John ii, 3; 19.) A believer may as soon expect to feel the sun’s rays upon a dark and cloudy day, as to feel strong consolation in Christ while he does not follow Him fully. When the disciples forsook the Lord and fled, they escaped danger, but they were miserable and sad. When, shortly after, they confessed Him boldly before men, they were cast into prison and beaten; but we are told “they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts v. 41.) Oh, for our own sakes, if there were no other reason, let us strive to be holy! He that follows Jesus most fully will always follow Him most comfortably.

(h) Lastly, we must be holy, *because without holiness on earth we shall never be prepared to enjoy heaven*. Heaven is a holy place. The Lord of heaven is a holy Being. The angels are holy creatures. Holiness is written on everything in heaven. The book of Revelation says expressly, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” (Rev. xxi. 27.)

I appeal solemnly to everyone who reads these pages, How shall we ever be at home and happy in heaven, if we die unholy? Death works no change. The grave makes no alteration. Each will rise again with the same character in which he breathed his last. Where will our place be if we are strangers to holiness now?

Suppose for a moment that you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness. What would you do? What possible enjoyment could you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their pleasures are not your pleasures, their tastes not your tastes, their character not your character. How could you possibly be happy, if you had not been holy on earth?

Now perhaps you love the company of the light and the careless, the worldly-minded and the covetous, the reveller and the pleasure-seeker, the ungodly and the profane. There will be none such in heaven.

Now perhaps you think the saints of God too strict and particular, and serious. You rather avoid them. You have no delight in their society. There will be no other company in heaven.

Now perhaps you think praying, and Scripture-reading, and hymn singing, dull

and melancholy, and stupid work—a thing to be tolerated now and then, but not enjoyed. You reckon the Sabbath a burden and a weariness; you could not possibly spend more than a small part of it in worshipping God. But remember, heaven is a never-ending Sabbath. The inhabitants thereof rest not day or night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” and singing the praise of the Lamb. How could an unholy man find pleasure in occupation such as this?

Think you that such an one would delight to meet David, and Paul, and John, after a life spent in doing the very things they spoke against? Would he take sweet counsel with them, and find that he and they had much in common?—Think you, above all, that he would rejoice to meet Jesus, the Crucified One, face to face, after cleaving to the sins for which He died, after loving His enemies and despising His friends? Would he stand before Him with confidence, and join in the cry, “This is our God; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation”? (Isa. xxv. 9.) Think you not rather that the tongue of an unholy man would cleave to the roof of his mouth with shame, and his only desire would be to be cast out! He would feel a stranger in a land he knew not, a black sheep amidst Christ’s holy flock. The voice of Cherubim and Seraphim, the song of Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven, would be a language he could not understand. The very air would seem an air he could not breathe.

I know not what others may think, but to me it does seem clear that heaven would be a miserable place to an unholy man. It cannot be otherwise. People may say, in a vague way, “they hope to go to heaven;” but they do not consider what they say. There must be a certain “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.” Our hearts must be somewhat in tune. To reach the holiday of glory, we must pass through the training school of grace. We must be heavenly-minded, and have heavenly tastes, in the life that now is, or else we shall never find ourselves in heaven, in the life to come.

And now, before I go any further, let me say a few words by way of application.

(1) For one thing, let me ask everyone who may read these pages, *Are you holy?* Listen, I pray you, to the question I put to you this day. Do you know anything of the holiness of which I have been speaking?

I do not ask whether you attend your church regularly—whether you have been baptized, and received the Lord’s Supper—whether you have the name of Christian—I ask something more than all this: *Are you holy, or are you not?*

I do not ask whether you approve of holiness in others—whether you like to read the lives of holy people, and to talk of holy things, and to have on your table holy books—whether you mean to be holy, and hope you will be holy some day—I ask something further: *Are you yourself holy this very day, or are you not?*

And why do I ask so straitly, and press the question so strongly? I do it because the Scripture says, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is written, it is not my fancy—it is the Bible, not my private opinion—it is the Word of God, not of man—“*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*” (Heb. xii. 14.)

Alas, what searching, sifting words are these! What thoughts come across my mind, as I write them down! I look at the world, and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness. I look at professing Christians, and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name. I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, “With-

out holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Surely it is a text that ought to make us consider our ways, and search our hearts. Surely it should raise within us solemn thoughts, and send us to prayer.

You may try to put me off by saying “you feel much, and think much about these things: far more than many suppose.” I answer, “This is not the point. The poor lost souls in hell do as much as this. The great question is not what you *think*, and what you *feel*, but what you *DO*.”

You may say, “It was never meant that all Christians should be holy, and that holiness, such as I have described, is only for great saints, and people of uncommon gifts.” I answer, “I cannot see that in Scripture. I read that *every man* who hath hope in Christ purifieth himself.” (1 John iii. 3.)—“Without holiness *no man* shall see the Lord.”

You may say, “It is impossible to be so holy and to do our duty in this life at the same time: the thing cannot be done.” I answer, “You are mistaken. It *can* be done. With Christ on your side nothing is impossible. It *has* been done by many. David, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero’s household, are all examples that go to prove it.”

You may say, “If I were so holy I would be unlike other people.” I answer, “I know it well. It is just what you ought to be. Christ’s true servants always were unlike the world around them—a separate nation, a peculiar people;—and you must be so too, if you would be saved!”

You may say, “At this rate very few will be saved.” I answer, “I know it. It is precisely what we are told in the Sermon on the Mount.” The Lord Jesus said so 1,900 years ago. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. vii. 14.) Few will be saved, because few will take the trouble to seek salvation. Men will not deny themselves the pleasures of sin and their own way for a little season. They turn their backs on an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” “Ye will not come unto Me,” says Jesus, “that ye might have life.” (John v. 40.) You may say, “These are hard sayings: the way is very narrow.” I answer, “I know it. So says the Sermon on the Mount.” The Lord Jesus said so 1,900 years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily, and that they must be ready to cut off hand or foot, if they would be His disciples. It is in religion as it is in other things, “there are no gains without pains.” That which costs nothing is worth nothing.

Whatever we may think fit to say, we must be holy, if we would see the Lord. Where is our Christianity if we are not? We must not merely have a Christian name, and Christian knowledge, we must have a Christian *character* also. We must be saints on earth, if ever we mean to be saints in heaven. God has said it, and He will not go back: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “The Pope’s calendar,” says Jenkyn, “only makes saints of the *dead*, but Scripture requires sanctity in the *living*.” “Let not men deceive themselves,” says Owen; “sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary unto those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Christ unto salvation. He leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members.”

Surely we need not wonder that Scripture says “Ye must be born again.” (John iii. 7.) Surely it is clear as noon-day that many professing Christians need a complete

change—new hearts, new natures—if ever they are to be saved. Old things must pass away—they must become new creatures. “Without holiness no man,” be he who he may, “shall see the Lord.”

(a) Let me, for another thing, speak a little to believers. I ask you this question, “*Do you think you feel the importance of holiness as much as you should?*”

I own I fear the temper of the times about this subject. I doubt exceedingly whether it holds that place which it deserves in the thoughts and attention of some of the Lord’s people. I would humbly suggest that we are apt to overlook the doctrine of growth in grace, and that we do not sufficiently consider how very far a person may go in a profession of religion, and yet have no grace, and be dead in God’s sight after all. I believe that Judas Iscariot seemed very like the other Apostles. When the Lord warned them that one would betray Him, no one said, “Is it Judas?” We had better think more about the Churches of Sardis and Laodicea than we do.

I have no desire to make an idol of holiness. I do not wish to dethrone Christ, and put holiness in His place. But I must candidly say, I wish sanctification was more thought of in this day than it seems to be, and I therefore take occasion to press the subject on all believers into whose hands these pages may fall. I fear it is sometimes forgotten that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things, beyond question, but one is never found without the other. All Justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification, unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ’s work *for you*, unless you can show us the Spirit’s work *in you*. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided. I doubt not that many believers know these things, but I think it good for us to be put in remembrance of them. Let us prove that we know them by our lives. Let us try to keep in view this text more continually: “Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

I must frankly say I wish there was not such an excessive *sensitiveness* on the subject of holiness as I sometimes perceive in the minds of believers. A man might really think it was a dangerous subject to handle, so cautiously is it touched! Yet surely when we have exalted Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life,” we cannot err in speaking strongly about what should be the character of His people. Well says Rutherford, “The way that crieth down duties and sanctification, is not the way of grace. Believing and doing are blood-friends.”

I would say it with all reverence, but say it I must—I sometimes fear if Christ were on earth now, there are not a few who would think His preaching *legal*; and if Paul were writing his Epistles, there are those who would think he had better not write the latter part of most of them as he did. But let us remember that the Lord Jesus *did* speak the Sermon on the Mount, and that the Epistle to the Ephesians contains six chapters and not four. I grieve to feel obliged to speak in this way, but I am sure there is a cause.

That great divine, John Owen, the Dean of Christ Church, used to say, more than two hundred years ago, that there were people whose whole religion seemed to consist in going about complaining of their own corruptions, and telling everyone that they could do nothing of themselves. I am afraid that after two centuries the same thing might be said with truth of some of Christ’s professing people in this day. I

know there are texts in Scripture which warrant such complaints. I do not object to them when they come from men who walk in the steps of the Apostle Paul, and fight a good fight, as he did, against sin, the devil, and the world. But I never like such complaints when I see ground for suspecting, as I often do, that they are only a cloak to cover spiritual laziness, and an excuse for spiritual sloth. If we say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am," let us also be able to say with him, "I press toward the mark." Let us not quote his example in one thing, while we do not follow him in another. (Rom. vii. 24.; Philip. iii. 14.)

I do not set up myself to be better than other people, and if anyone asks, "What are you, that you write in this way?" I answer, "I am a very poor creature indeed." But I say that I cannot read the Bible without desiring to see many believers more spiritual, more holy, more single-eyed, more heavenly-minded, more whole-hearted than they are in the nineteenth century. I want to see among believers more of a pilgrim spirit, a more decided separation from the world, a conversation more evidently in heaven, a closer walk with God—and therefore I have written as I have.

Is it not true that we need a higher standard of personal holiness in this day? Where is our patience? Where is our zeal? Where is our love? Where are our works? Where is the power of religion to be seen, as it was in times gone by? Where is that unmistakable tone which used to distinguish the saints of old, and shake the world? Verily our silver has become dross, our wine mixed with water, and our salt has very little savour. We are all more than half asleep. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us awake, and sleep no more. Let us open our eyes more widely than we have done hitherto. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us."—"Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God."—(Heb. xii. 11; 2 Cor. vii. 1.) "Did Christ die," says Owen, "and shall sin live? Was He crucified in the world, and shall our affections to the world be quick and lively? Oh, where is the spirit of him, who by the cross of Christ was crucified to the world, and the world to him?"

III. Let me, in the last place, offer *a word of advice to all who desire to be holy.*

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then you must *begin with Christ*. You will do just nothing at all, and make no progress till you feel your sin and weakness, and flee to Him. He is the root and beginning of all holiness, and the way to be holy is to come to Him by faith and be joined to Him. Christ is not wisdom and righteousness only to His people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and sad work they make of it. They toil and labour, and turn over new leaves, and make many changes; and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood, before she came to Christ, they feel "nothing bettered, but rather worse." (Mark v. 26.) They run in vain, and labour in vain; and little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand; their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a leaky vessel: the leak gains on them, not they on the leak. Other foundation of "holiness" can no man lay than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. "Without Christ we can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) It is a strong but true saying of Traill's, "Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly—righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation—sanctification out of Christ is filth and sin—redemption out of Christ is bondage and slavery."

Do you want to attain holiness? Do you feel this day a real hearty desire to be holy? Would you be a partaker of the Divine nature? Then go *to Christ*. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Linger not. Think not to make yourself ready. Go and say to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn

“ Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, flee to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.”

There is not a brick nor a stone laid in the work of our sanctification till we go to Christ. Holiness is His special gift to His believing people. Holiness is the work He carries on in their hearts, by the Spirit whom He puts within them. He is appointed a “Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance” as well as remission of sins.—“To as many as receive Him, He gives power to become sons of God.” (Acts v. 31; John i. 12, 13.) Holiness comes not of blood—parents cannot give it to their children: nor yet of the will of the flesh—man cannot produce it in himself: nor yet of the will of man—ministers cannot give it you by baptism. Holiness comes from Christ. It is the result of vital union with Him. It is the fruit of being a living branch of the True Vine. Go then to Christ and say, “Lord, not only save me from the guilt of sin, but send the Spirit, whom Thou didst promise, and save me from its power. Make me holy. Teach me to do Thy will.”

Would you continue holy? Then *abide in Christ*. He says Himself, “Abide in Me and I in you,—he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. (John xv. 4, 5.) It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell—a full supply for all a believer’s wants. He is the Physician to whom you must daily go, if you would keep well. He is the Manna which you must daily eat, and the Rock of which you must daily drink. His arm is the arm on which you must daily lean, as you come up out of the wilderness of this world. You must not only be rooted, you must also be *built up* in Him. Paul was a man of God indeed—a holy man—a growing, thriving Christian and what was the secret of it all? He was one to whom Christ was “all in all.” He was ever “looking unto Jesus.” “I can do all things,” he says, “through Christ which strengtheneth me.” “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Let us go and do likewise. (Heb. xii. 2; Phil. iv. 13; Gal. ii. 20.)

May all who read these pages know these things by experience, and not by hearsay only. May we all feel the importance of holiness, far more than we have ever done yet! May our years be *holy years* with our souls, and then they will be happy ones! Whether we live, may we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, may we die unto the Lord; or if He comes for us, may we be found in peace, without spot, and blameless!