

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

WE MUST BE HOLY.

READER,

We must be holy on earth before we die, if we desire to go to heaven after death. If we hope to dwell with God for ever in the life to come, we must endeavour to be like Him in the life that now is. We must not only admire holiness, and *wish* for holiness: *we must be holy*.

Holiness cannot justify and save us: holiness cannot cover our iniquities, make satisfaction for transgressions, pay our debts to God. Our best works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God's law. The righteousness which Jesus Christ brought in must be our only confidence,—the blood of atonement our only hope. All this is perfectly true, and yet *we must be holy*.

We must be holy, because God in the Bible plainly commands it. "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).

We must be holy, because this is one great end for which Christ came into the world. "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).

We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in Christ. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James ii. 17, 26).

We must be holy, because this is the only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. What can be more plain than our Lord's own words? "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." (John xiv. 15, 21).

We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we are God's children. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (Rom. viii. 14; I John iii. 10).

Lastly, we must be holy, because without holiness on earth we should never be prepared and meet for heaven. It is written of the heavenly glory, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. xxi. 27). St. Paul says expressly, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14).

Ah, reader, the last text I have just quoted is very solemn. It ought to make you think. It was written by the hand of inspired man: it is not my private fancy. Its words are the words of the Bible: not of my own invention. God has said it, and God will stand to it: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

What tremendous words these are! 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, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Surely it is a text that ought to make you consider your ways, and search your hearts. Surely it should raise within you solemn thoughts, and send you 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**. *Are you holy?*

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 this 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 God on your side, nothing is impossible. It *has* been done by many: Moses, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero's household, are all examples that go to prove it.

You may say, If you were so holy, you would be unlike other people. I answer, I know it well: it is just what I want you 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: Jesus said so eighteen hundred years ago. 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 season; for this they turn their backs on an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "Ye will not come to 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: Jesus said so eighteen hundred years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily, 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.

Reader, whatever you may think fit to say, you *must* be holy if you would see the Lord. Where is your Christianity if you are not? Show it to me without holiness, if you can. You must not merely have a Christian name and Christian knowledge, you must have a Christian *character* also: you must be a saint on earth, if ever you mean to be a saint 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 Jenken, "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

Jesus unto salvation: He leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members."

Surely you will not wonder that Scripture says, "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 7). Surely it is clear as noon-day that many of you need a complete change,—new hearts, new natures,—if ever you are to be saved. Old things must pass away, you must become new creatures. Without holiness, no man, be he who he may,—no man shall see the Lord.

Reader, consider well what I have said. Do you feel any desire to be holy? Does your conscience whisper, "I am not holy yet, but I should like to become so"? Listen to the advice I am going to give you. The Lord grant you may take it and act upon it!

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then *begin with Christ*. You will do just nothing till you feel your sin and weakness, and flee to Him: He is the beginning of all holiness. He 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 many 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. 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. 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."

Would you be holy: Would you be partakers of the Divine nature? Then *go to Christ*. Wait for nothing: wait for nobody: linger not. Think not to make you 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. 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, when you have once been made so? 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 bringeth forth much fruit" (John xv. 4, 5).

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.

Reader, may you and I 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 I know they will be happy ones! But this I say once more, "*We must be holy.*"
