

**Following Holiness
Biblical Light on the
Heavenly Way**

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FOREWORD

This booklet "Following Holiness" by Dr. Rosco Brong

(deceased), former Dean of Lexington Baptist College, is a very necessary study on holiness in a day where holiness is being substituted by worldliness and compromise. But the Word of God says "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*" (Hebrews 12:14). Every born again believer is created unto holiness. "*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Ephesians 4:24). The Holy Spirit comes to work in every child of God. "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). The purpose is to conform his people unto the image of Jesus Christ. God is determined to make his people like his son. "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*" (I John 3:2-3).

I recommend this booklet be used as a study guide in Baptist Churches.

May God bless this study guide to teach and strengthen His Children.

Pastor Al Gormley

PREFACE

Holiness or sanctification is one of the most neglected doctrine of the Bible among most professed believers. As a result, faith is weak and unproductive; and Christianity becomes just another religion of empty forms and pretensions, with no power to reach the hearts of sinners.

On the other hand, some well meaning but misguided souls are exceedingly zealous, like the Pharisees of old, for a counterfeit holiness which is willing to ignore divine truth in order to establish human righteousness.

Biblical sanctification begins and ends in the redemptive work of Christ. In our Christian experience, sanctification is not cleaning the outside of the platter or

whitewashing the tombstone. It is rather easy for anyone to make up a list of rules from human custom and tradition, perhaps even including a few Biblical commands, and to suppose that obeying those rules is holiness. But scriptural sanctification strikes much deeper than that.

My prayer is that God may be pleased to use this little book as a means of helping its readers to find and follow the Way of Holiness.

ROSCO BRONG

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Following Holiness

GENUINE HOLINESS IS INDISPENSABLE TO ACCEPTABILITY WITH GOD

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14.)

Without holiness no one shall see the Lord. Obviously, the reference here must be to seeing Him in a favorable sense. In Revelation 1:7 we are told that every eye shall see Him when He comes in judgment, but that is a different sight from the seeing which will transform His people into His likeness (I John 3:2). This is the seeing here referred to.

Now, our text says that we should follow peace with all men, and holiness; or, more accurately, **the** holiness; without which no one shall see the Lord. Evidently the scripture and the testimony of experience agree that we do not yet enjoy peace with all men or holiness in the fullest sense, because we do not merely follow what we already fully possess.

Moreover, the word for "follow" is rather strong in the original, and could be translated "run after" or "pursue." The holiness without which no one shall see the Lord is worth our most diligent efforts to attain.

MEANING OF HOLINESS

"Holiness" and "sanctification" are two English words used to translate the same Greek word. The essential meaning is that of being **set apart**. So with the related words "holy," "saint," "sanctify," and "hallow." Any connotation of cleansing from sin is strictly coincidental.

That the essential meaning of "sanctify" is simply to "set apart" is manifest in the use of the word in I Peter 3:15: "...*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.*"

Certainly God needs no purifying or cleansing from sin. But we are to **set Him apart** in our affections as the supreme and unrivaled object of devotion; or, in Old Testament language, we must have no other gods in His presence.

We can avoid much misunderstanding of the Bible doctrine of holiness if we will keep in mind that **in Biblical usage the words "holy," "sanctify," etc., do not always or necessarily involve any change in the condition or nature of the things or persons sanctified, but simply that in some sense they are SET APART for some special reason or purpose.**

HOLINESS IN PATTERN

The God Who created man in His own image is preeminently the holy God. "...***Holy and reverend is his name.***" (Psalms 111:9.)

Moses repeatedly received from God and transmitted to the people the testimony that **God is holy**. Isaiah in vision heard the seraphim crying, "***Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!***" (Isaiah 6:3.) And John on Patmos tells of seeing in and around the throne of God in heaven four living creatures who "...*rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*" (Revelation 4:8.)

So outstanding is holiness as a characteristic of God that the third person of the trinity is generally called in the Bible the **Holy Spirit**.

And **when God became man He remained holy, and provided in Christ the perfect pattern of what a man ought to be, and of what redeemed man must become:**

"*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners...*" He "*...was, in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*" (Hebrews 7:26; 4:15.)

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:11,18.)

HOLINESS IN POSITION

Substitution is the core of the gospel message, and when Satan persuades men to reject the Bible doctrine of substitution he has turned them away from the Christ of the Bible, though they may still use His name in vain.

In the Old Testament types, the innocent animals died as substitutes for sinful men and the blood of the sacrifices made an atonement [covering] for the souls of men. In the New Testament fulfillment,

"...Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews. 13:12.)

This holy or sanctified position of God's people, provided for through the blood of Christ shed on Calvary, is made real and effective in human experience by faith. The blood, we say, is applied by faith: that is, the merits and benefits of the blood become effective by faith. So Christ sent Paul as a minister and witness to the Gentiles

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18.)

It is in the sense of position that all God's people, all true believers, are called saints in the Bible. This position, once gained, can never be lost:

"..We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:10,14.)

HOLINESS IN PRACTICE

Our secure position in Christ is designed for the comfort and encouragement of true saints, not for the delusion of hypocrites: though unlearned and unstable souls may twist scripture truth to their own destruction. (II Peter 3:16.)

But God's word calls upon His people in their sanctified position to sanctify themselves in their practice, their conduct, their behavior.

"..As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:15,16.)

"...Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (II Corinthians 6:17-7:1.)

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13,14.)

HOLINESS IN PROSPECT

Unlike some deceived souls today, the apostle Paul did not pretend to have attained "sinless perfection" in the flesh, but rather looked forward to attaining it in the resurrection:

"...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: . . . if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:8,11,12.)

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. . . Faithful is he that calleth you, who also WILL do it." (I Thessalonians 5:23,24-note future tense.)

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6.)

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, . . . And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:2,27.)

So for eternity our holy God will be Himself the temple and the light in that holy city "*whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrews 11:10); His glorified saints shall serve the Lamb Who redeemed them, "*and they shall reign for ever and ever*" (Revelation 22:5.)

The Way of Holiness

**ONLY THE CHRIST OF GOD'S HOLY WORD CAN
TAKE US TO A HEAVENLY HOME**

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8.)

Whatever this text may mean in terms of a millennial kingdom, the primary and ultimate spiritual reference must be to the Messiah, the Christ, in all ages the one and only Way of Life for His people. "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,*" (John 14:6); and this is just as true today as it will be in any future age.

A HIGH WAY

Let us note first, then, that this way of life, this way of holiness, is a high way. In fact, all the ways of God are high above the ways of men:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8,9.)

God's way in Christ, however, is so high that we cannot possibly reach it of ourselves: only in humble surrender to His saving grace do we find ourselves transported into the way of holiness:

"...For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:14.)

A NARROW WAY

Jesus Himself warns us that the way of life is a narrow way: "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (Matthew 7:13,14.)

This is not popular religion, but we had better be clear in our minds whether we wish to be popular with the world or accepted with God. We cannot be both. God's way is a narrow way. Boasting of broadmindedness in religion is mere scatterbrained foolishness. The only right way is God's way, and His way is Christ, and His Christ is the Christ of the Bible.

A HOLY WAY

The way of life is the way of holiness. Let us not shrink from this doctrine merely because some people have misunderstood it. Certainly we are not yet what we ought to be and what we want to be, but if we are children of God we are a holy people; that is, a people set apart.

Nothing that defiles shall enter the heavenly city (Revelation 21:27), and it is written of the way of holiness in our text that "*the unclean shall not pass over it.*"

God's declared will for His people is their sanctification, or holiness, and without holiness "*no man shall see the Lord.*" (Hebrews 12:14.) "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:" (I Thessalonians 4:3.)

Holiness for the true child of God must be not only a matter of legal position and heavenly prospect, but also a matter of living practice. God's choicest promises of fellowship and blessing are for those of His people whose lives in daily conduct are set apart to Him. So let us walk in the way of holiness:

"*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" (II Corinthians 7:1.)

A PLAIN WAY

"...Wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8.) Surely this is an extraordinary and exciting statement. Obviously it cannot mean that any of God's children in this world are incapable of error. What then?

The word "therein," though supplied by the translators, offers one answer. Any errors we make are not in the way of holiness, but beside the way. That is, we err when we momentarily step out of the right way. This is true, but I rather doubt that it is the intended meaning.

More likely, the truth here expressed is that men brought into this way by the grace of God will not err to the extent that they depart from or lose the way. Children of God may act very foolishly sometimes, but if they really are His children they will persevere in the way of holiness.

It is true also that the way of holiness is plain enough even for a fool to find. If sinners go on to destruction, it is not because they cannot find the way: it is because they refuse to come this way even when it is pointed out to them.

A SAFE WAY

"No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there..." (Isaiah 35:9.) We may be physically hurt or killed, but no real or lasting harm can come to us if we are living in Christ.

If we are in the way of holiness, we are in the hand of Christ and of God. *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one"* (John. 10:28-30.) If we have found ourselves in the love of Christ, we can be sure that no power in heaven, earth, or hell "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39.)

A SURE WAY

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion..."
(Isaiah 35:10.) Perhaps Isaiah was thinking about Israel returning to earthly Zion, but believers in Christ have come (spiritually) ***"...unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..."*** (Hebrews 12:22.)

Some natural highways are beautiful but unfinished. None of them go far enough to reach an eternal goal. But the way of holiness has been completed: Jesus finished it on Calvary's cross. And if He has brought us into His way, He will stay with us to the end of the journey. He has never lost a soul that trusted Him, and He never will.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25,26.)

Nowhere is there another road like this way of holiness, in which every traveler is sure to reach his promised destination. It is a sure way, because Jesus has not only opened the road but also provides the spiritual power to take us through to the end of the journey.

A JOYFUL WAY

"They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" That is the climax, but it is written of people who ***"come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads"*** (Isaiah 35:10.)

Joy unmixed with sorrow awaits us at the end, but joy in the midst of sorrow encourages us on the way. The way of holiness is a joyful way, and gloomy Christians misrepresent it. They need to pray as David did, ***"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation..."*** (Psalms 51:12.)

***"...The joy of the Lord is your strength."* (Nehemiah 8:10.) The blessed (happy) God wants His people to be blessed (happy). If you cannot enjoy God and His word and work, may He make you miserable enough to surrender to His will in Christ, that He may lift you up and set your feet in the way of holiness, the way of everlasting joy.**

Entire Sanctification

COMPLETE HOLINESS IS ULTIMATE GOAL OF EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"And may the God of peace himself sanctify you to perfection, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thessalonians 5:23,24, improved translation.)

Language staggers at the task of transmitting the full meaning of this text which at first sight seems so simple. In the midst of a series of exhortations to practical obedience on the part of God's people, the inspired writers, as if realizing anew the inability even of saints to respond without divine help, suddenly break forth into this prayer for and assurance of the work of God in the sanctification of His people.

IMPROVED TRANSLATION

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you"-- so far we can translate with comparative ease, though understanding and interpreting the translation is another matter. But what next?

***"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly..."* says King James (I Thessalonians 5:23). But the word rendered "wholly" is a compound adjective in the original, not an adverb, and commentators disagree on its intent here. Tyndale said "throw out," or, in modern spelling, "throughout," which King James changed to "wholly." Some have suggested simply "all," meaning that Paul and his associates in writing this letter were praying for all the members of the Thessalonian church.**

But the adjective in dispute is compound, made by combining the words for "whole" and "end." Perhaps the idea in view here is sanctification to the extent that the sanctified will be wholly finished, completed, or perfected, and so I have freely translated the adjective by a phrase conveying this idea.

"*Your whole spirit,*" etc., is not an exact translation, as the adjective rendered "whole" is predicate rather than attributive, but it is practically impossible to render accurately the Greek construction and word order here in readable English.

More important is the corrected rendering "blamelessly" instead of "blameless." The prayer was not that the Thessalonians should be blameless but that they should be blamelessly preserved.

PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

Let us remember that in Biblical usage "sanctify" means "set apart," and that these Thessalonian saints had already been sanctified or set apart as God's people. "*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*" (II Thessalonians 2:13.)

In Biblical language all saved people, all children of God, all true believers in Christ, are saints. These terms are different ways of describing the same people. But "saints" may be more or less "saintly," holy, or sanctified: hence the frequent commands and promises of greater holiness to an already holy people.

Now, the prayer of our text is that God will so sanctify that the persons sanctified will be quite complete, wholly perfect, finished products of God's redeeming grace. Nothing less than this should be the goal and ambition of every true child of God.

How much holiness or sanctification have we experienced? To what extent have we been sanctified or set apart to the God Who commands us to "*...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts?...*" (I Peter 3:15.)

The three-fold division of our nature as set forth in our text offers a practical outline for self examination.

SANCTIFICATION OF SPIRIT

"Peter . . . to the strangers . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ . . ." (I Peter 1:1,2.) See also II Thessalonians 2:13, already quoted.

It is probable that the primary reference here is to the Holy Spirit, but His work of sanctification is first of all with the spirit of man. See I Corinthians 2:9-12.

So we are sanctified or set apart in spirit unto God at the very beginning of our Christian experience. So complete and permanent is this sanctification of spirit, inseparably connected with the new birth, that we read:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (I John 3:9.)

And again:

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.." (I John 5:18.)

Here is real "sinless perfection"! And note that in the Bible this claim is not made merely for a limited advanced class of God's people who are supposed to have obtained a "second blessing" or to have attained a "higher" or "deeper" spiritual life than ordinary Christians! No: the Bible claims this "sinless perfection," this absolute separation from sin, for "everyone that has been born of God."

On the other hand, of these same children of God, the same inspired writer says: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" (I John 1:8.)

"Now if I do that I would not," says Paul, "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." So, in Romans 7:20, is the paradox resolved.

As also in verse 25: "*So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*"

SANCTIFICATION OF SOUL

Obviously, then, scriptural sanctification in this life is NOT the "eradication of the old nature." The old man may be crucified, put off, and reckoned dead, but he is still with us while we live in this world.

***"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* (Galatians 5:17.)**

Now, the "soul" spoken of in our text seems to be or to include the permanent self, the ego, the conscience, the personal life which constitutes at once the battleground and, under God, the arbiter of this conflict between flesh and spirit.

It is this "soul" or "life" (the same word in the original) which in Matthew 16:24-27 Jesus commands His disciples to lose for His sake that they may find it. And our eternal rewards will be according to our works: that is, the degree to which our souls (lives) are sanctified (set apart) in His service.

Further sanctification of soul or life in order to a fuller manifestation of the divine relationship is the objective held forth in II Corinthians 6:14,16,17, 17:1:

"... Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: ... for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; ... Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

SANCTIFICATION OF BODY

Ceremonially and momentarily these bodies of flesh and blood are sanctified to divine service whenever we "*...through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body...*" (Romans 8:13.) But this momentary sanctification, though it becomes habitual in the life of a true Christian, does not in any wise change the sinful nature of corruptible flesh.

Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, who no doubt attained a higher degree of sanctification in his life than anyone on earth today, testified of himself in the present tense: "*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.*" (Romans 7:18.)

Moreover, the same apostle informs us: "*...Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruptionFor this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*" (I Corinthians 15:50,53.)

So it is not until the resurrection that the bodies of the saints will be finally, completely, and forever sanctified or set apart from sin and the sorrow, pain, death, and corruption that result from sin, to be henceforth for eternity a perfectly holy people in the presence of their holy God and Savior. "*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:1-4.)

Is it really possible for God's people that our "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blamelessly in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"? The prayer already has its answer: "*Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*" (I Thessalonians 5:24.)

Sanctified to Perfection

UNSANCTIFIED CHRISTIANITY IS A MOCKERY OF THE HOLINESS THAT GOD DEMANDS

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (I Thessalonians 4:3.)

A "Christianity" that has departed from God to make peace with the world, that has abandoned divine revelation for human reason, that has lost its fear of eternal torment and hope of eternal glory in its vain ambition for temporal pleasure, self, and power, is a mere mockery of the faith of the New Testament. The God of the Bible is the God of holiness, absolutely set apart from all other beings in the infinite perfections of His eternal self-existence, and He demands a measure of His own holiness in those whom He calls His people.

This is one of the greatest doctrine of the Bible, and can be approached in many ways. Viewing the will of God for our sanctification in its full range from eternity to eternity, we may think of Sanctification in Purpose, in Provision, in Position, in Progression, and in Perfection.

PURPOSE

God's perfect holiness is most clearly revealed to us in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26.)

But it is God's purpose from eternity that all His born-again children shall become like Jesus. *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did*

predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29.)

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" (Ephesians 1:4.)

PROVISION

It was easier for God to create the heavens and the earth than to redeem His chosen people. In creation, *"For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast."* (Psalms 33:9.) But sinners could become saints only at the cost of the precious blood of the Word become flesh.

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Hebrews 13:12.)

So Jesus came to accomplish the Father's purpose, to do the will of God, *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."* (Hebrews 10:10,14.)

POSITION

Faith brings us into the position of sanctification that Christ has provided for us. The Savior so informed Paul when He sent him to the Gentiles,

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18.)

Sanctifying faith in human experience is possible only in connection with the sanctifying, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit:

"...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (II Thessalonians 2:13.)

PROGRESSION

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (I Thessalonians 4:3,4,7.)

Here we have an exhortation to people already in a sanctified position to be progressively sanctified in practice. Even so, Jesus prayed for those who were already His sanctified disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17:17.)

If we have a genuine experience of divine grace and thus occupy the position of saints, we are under strong obligation to "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..." (II Peter 3:18), "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6.)

Genuine saints of God learn this practical, progressive aspect of sanctification under the chastening hand of our heavenly Father, Who corrects us "...for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Hebrews 12:10.)

PERFECTION

Unlike the pitiful pretenders to perfection in this present flesh, the apostle Paul expected to attain his goal in the resurrection "Not as

though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12,14.)

Only in the resurrection, and then for an endless eternity to follow "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly". (I Corinthians 15:49.) Then indeed we shall "...be conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29.) Then at last "...we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (I John 3:2.)

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (I Thessalonians 5:23.)

Means of Holiness

BIBLE REVEALS HOW GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE BECOME HOLY AS GOD IS HOLY

"But 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" (I Peter 1:15,16.)

No doubt, so far as we know, God could, if He would, create a holy people without the use of means, as perhaps he used no means but His own Word and Spirit in creating the heavens and the earth. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth " (Genesis 1:1); "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalms 33:6-9.) But in fact He has chosen generally to work through means, and according to His own word this is especially true in His work of redemption. His people were not designed to be robots, but to become "...partakers of the divine nature..." (II Peter 1:4.)

Man, therefore, unlike beasts and contrary to the opinions of fatalistic philosophers, is called upon in the Bible to participate and cooperate in the attainment of his own destiny. If this seems too great a challenge to little souls, it is simply because they "...judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life...." (Acts 13:46.)

Part of God's purpose for His elect (Ephesians 1:4) is "...that we should be holy....". We can be sure that His purpose will be accomplished, but it will be accomplished through the appointed means and not otherwise.

MEANS PROVIDED

With comparatively little human instrumentality, God has provided the blood of Christ, the written word, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as means of holiness.

True, God used the wicked hands of men (Acts 2:23) to shed the blood; true, the word came by means of "...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21), and true, the Holy Spirit works largely in and through His people. "...but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17.)

Yet you and I had nothing to do with providing these means. They are God's provision for us, and if God used men in providing them, they were other men, mostly of other generations and unaware even of our then future existence. So we can classify the blood, the word, and the Spirit as means provided apart from any act of our own.

MEANS OF MERIT

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12.) "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22.)

Only upon the merits of the blood of Jesus could God justly separate us from our sins and set us apart from a lost world as the chosen objects of His redeeming love. So far is this true that His righteousness in passing by the sins of Old Testament saints did not become manifest until His display of justice on Calvary. (Romans 3:24-26.)

Moreover, the same blood of Christ which alone merits the sanctification of unworthy sinners to become the people of God; that same blood is the meritorious ground of continual cleansing:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7.)

MEANS OF TRUTH

"Sanctify them in thy truth: thy word is truth Sanctify them in thy truth: thy word is truth . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:17,19.)

As in all God's work, so in the work of salvation and the "things that accompany salvation," His spoken or written word has a prominent part. "I have given them thy word,..." said Jesus in John 17:14, and then, remarking the effect of this word in making His disciples already a people "not of the world," He went on to pray for their sanctification on continually higher ground.

Note that the same word of God by which His people are called to the beginning of a new life set apart from the world is the word by which TRUE CHRISTIANS ARE SANCTIFIED TO A MORE PERFECT UNION WITH CHRIST. All attempts to unionize a Christianity heedless to God's written word can result only in unions with anti-christs.

MEANS OF POWER

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (II Thessalonians 2:13.) This statement concerning the Thessalonian saints is true of all genuine believers. It is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that makes the difference between what some theologians name the "general" and "effectual" calls of the gospel.

Stating it otherwise, on the divine side the Holy Spirit's work of conviction (John 16:8-10) and regeneration (John 1:13; 3:5-8) is the power that converts a lost sinner into a saint. So Paul and Sosthenes, reminding the Corinthians of their former sinful state, declared:

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (I Corinthians 6:11.)

Once more, note that the same Spirit Who set us apart unto God at the beginning of our Christian experience is He Who now provides sanctifying power in our lives

"If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life because of righteousness...Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Romans 8:10; 15:13.)

MEANS APPLIED

Some other means of holiness are also of divine provision, but call for active reception or application on our part. Without this personal participation or application, we have no promise in God's word of any spiritual benefits to us from His provision.

Among the applied means of holiness, or the means of effecting holiness in our individual lives, may be mentioned faith, prayer, will, and discipline.

MEANS OF FAITH

Jesus sent the apostle Paul to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in [toward] me." (Acts 26:18.)

"According to your faith" (Matthew 9:29 etc.) is a principle of wide application. Faith, too, is a sanctifying means not only at our entrance to the Christian life but also in maintaining a holy walk. "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17.) "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (II Corinthians 5:7.)

MEANS OF PRAYER

It seems hardly necessary to multiply scripture references to show the need of prayer to attain a greater degree of holiness. But see for examples Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; I Thessalonians 3:11-13, etc.

Too often it is as true of holiness as of less important blessings that "...ye have not, because ye ask not." (James. 4:2.) God knows how to give good gifts to His children, and Jesus commands us:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matthew 7:7,8.)

MEANS OF WILL

"...This is the will of God, even your sanctification." (I Thessalonians 4:3.)

So we need have no doubt as to God's will in this matter. But what about our own will? In a general way, we may concede that our will ought always to be in accord with the will of God. But is it? The scriptures clearly call upon us to exercise our own will in sanctification.

The very command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," shows our responsibility for holiness. And in I Thessalonians 4:4, the sanctification that is God's will is explained as meaning "that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor."

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11.) Habitually consider yourself dead to sin but alive to God; this is sanctification, and this is an act of will. In fact, the whole sixth chapter of Romans is an appeal to the will of baptized believers to practice what they professed in their baptism.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (logical) service.." (Romans 12:1.)

MEANS OF DISCIPLINE

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. . . for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:6,10.)

The entire twelfth chapter of Hebrews should be studied carefully in this connection. God will not permit His children to persist in sin without chastisement, of which all His legitimate children are partakers. "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Vs.8). This verse alone disproves all claims to sinless perfection in mortal life; "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Vs. 10). This verse tells us the purpose of God's chastening work; "Now no chastening for

the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Vs. 11-13). These verses throw upon us the responsibility for a proper response to this chastening.

Assuming that we are not bastards (verse 8), but legitimate children of God, if we refuse to progress in holiness by any other means, God assures us that He will beat it into us, even if to do so He must beat us to death.

"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psalms 89:30-32.)

"And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts" (Isaiah 22:14.)

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16.)

"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5.)

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:29-32.)

"Be Ye Separate"

***GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE SEPARATED FROM SIN
IN ORDER TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM***

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6:17,18.)

Today's fashion in religion is compromise. It is supposed to be all right to believe anything, true or false, so long as you do not have convictions strong enough to embarrass anyone that believes the opposite. Unity in Christ in the one faith of His word is unthought-of of; there is much mouthing about union and brotherhood, but what is meant is union with the enemies of Christ who ignore or deny the authority of His word.

Modern "Christianity" has generally abandoned the hope of victory over the world, and so is joining hands with the world against the commandments of God while still wearing His name; taking His name in vain.

The promise of divine fellowship in our text is linked to a command to separation. The apostle then exhorts us: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1.)

IMMORALITY

However much their practice may belie their profession, I suppose there are few Christians today that would deny their obligation to cleanse themselves from every defilement of flesh: that is, from gross sins of immorality. Yet we need constantly to remind ourselves what we must do to cleanse ourselves and stay cleansed from such defilement.

First, we are commanded not to sin. "...These things write I unto you, that ye sin not..." (I John 2:1.)

Second, we need to recognize that sin is not only in the outward act, but in the thoughts and desires which may lead to such an act. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew

5:28); "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15); "The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men" (Proverbs 24:9).

CONFESSION

Third, if we are truly God's children "by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26), we are to remember that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1) and believe that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9), for "...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

Fourth, and this is the point emphasized in our text; we must learn to hate sin as God hates sin, whether in our own lives or in the lives of others; we must "...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11); we must be separated from sin and, in a sense, from sinners.

UNEQUAL YOKES

This separation does not mean Pharisaism; it does mean: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?... " (II Corinthians 6:14.)

Our need for cleansing from "filthiness" or defilement of spirit is even greater than our need for cleansing from fleshly sins, but the sad fact is that, for lack of scriptural teaching, God's people generally cannot even recognize their spiritual defilement as the horrible sin that it is in the sight of God.

IDOLATRY

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) (in my presence), is the very first of the ten commandments, and literal idolatry (the bowing down to or serving of images) is specifically forbidden in the second. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; " (Exodus 20:4,5.)

But images need not be of material substance: men may form mental images and worship the vain fancies of their own imagination. So we are told that "...stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Samuel 15:23), and that covetousness "is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

One of the most popular idols in modern Christianity is "ecumenicalism," the dream of a world "church" ruled by a self-constituted hierarchy or religious oligarchy instead of a pope, but with a faith more remote from the Bible than Catholicism has ever dared to be.

On the other hand, countless Christians have made their particular "church" or "denomination" an idol in their hearts, giving to its name or its "program" a loyalty and devotion that ought to be given only to God.

Modern false prophets and their followers who sacrifice Bible truth for the sake of denominationalism, interdenominationalism, or "undenominationalism" are just as guilty of idolatry as the worshipers of any graven image ever set up: and idolatry is as great an abomination to God today as it ever was.

HERESY

It is a shocking fact that some nominal Baptists seem to think that it does not matter what a man believes, says, writes, or does so long as he calls himself a Baptist of some variety or other he must be free to

serve Satan in the ranks of and at the expense of God's people, and other Baptists in the same "denomination" are bound to support him in his devilish work.

Freedom for heretics but enslavement of the faithful for the support of their enemies, is the rule sought for and now much practiced among Baptists, to mention no others. God's rule is different:

"...Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17.)

"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3:10,11.)

WHOSE FELLOWSHIP?

We have to choose whose fellowship we desire: the fellowship of God and His faithful servants, or the fellowship of Satan and his hosts of hypocrites. We cannot have both.

"...Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." (II Chronicles 19:2.)

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6 :17,18.)

Publications

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