

General Observations on the Subject of Holiness

by Dougan Clark

The sermon emphasizes the importance of sanctification as a distinct state of grace that can occur at a later time, even after conversion, and encourages believers to seek and trust in Jesus for their holiness.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:6, Matthew 10:32, Matthew 26:41, Romans 8:13, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Philippians 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 6:1, James 5:16, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Sanctification", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the distinct states of grace - regeneration and sanctification, emphasizing that they can be imparted close together in time. He refutes the unscriptural idea that all Christians are sanctified at conversion, using examples from Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, and Hebrews. Clark highlights that sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit, separate from growth in grace, and can be experienced after conversion, as seen in the examples of the disciples at Pentecost and the Samaritans. He encourages believers not to be discouraged by the challenges of daily life but to seek holiness, trust in God's provision, and resist temptations with the help of the Spirit.

Transcript

1. Regeneration being the beginning, and sanctification the completion of the work of inward holiness, these are distinct states of grace, imparted by the Holy Spirit; but they need not be far apart in time. In some instances--which, however, seem to be very rare--the experiences are received at once, or at least, cannot be separated by the consciousness of the individual; and it is said that one man was converted, sanctified, called to the ministry, and entered upon the ministry--just as in the case of the Apostle Paul--within three days. But, if all persons are sanctified when they are converted, it follows that all Christians now living, unless they are in a state of backsliding, are wholly sanctified. And yet, the number is comparatively small, who even lay claim to such an experience, while the great majority, so far from claiming it or seeking it, do not even believe in it.

Furthermore, the idea that all persons are sanctified at their conversion, is quite unscriptural. The Corinthians were undoubtedly converted Christians, and yet, they were "carnal," "babes," and far from being holy in their lives. The Galatians were Christians, yet seeking to gain perfection by the works of the law. The Thessalonians were Christians, yet Paul prays that the God of peace might "sanctify them wholly." The Hebrews were Christians, yet, the inspired writer exhorts them to leave "principles and go on

to perfection." I have stated that sanctification is imparted in connection with the baptism with the Holy Ghost; and this baptism is evidently not always experienced at conversion. It was not experienced till Pentecost by the hundred-and-twenty, who, nevertheless, had all been converted before Pentecost. It was not experienced by the Samaritans who were converted by the preaching of Philip, until Peter and John Prayed for them, and laid their hands on them. Conversion, therefore, and entire sanctification, are separate and distinct experiences, which may, nevertheless--and ought to--come very near together; and not to be separated, as they often are, by forty years, or a life-time of wilderness wandering.

2. Some earnest Christians hesitate to believe that so great a blessing as holiness can be for them. It may be possible, they argue, for a few ministers or piously-disposed persons, who have leisure to devote themselves to religion, to receive and live out this great blessing; but for us, men of business, men of many cares, brought into daily contact with a sinful world, it is out of the range of possibility for us to be kept wholly free from its stains and corruptions. The man overwhelmed with worldly business, the woman fretted and worried with household cares, says, almost despairingly, "It is not for me."

Now, let these glance for a moment at the third chapter of Ephesians, and read what Dr. Steele has aptly called, "Paul's higher life prayer:" "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Who was it that Paul was praying for? Only a few ministers of the Gospel? A few piously disposed persons? A few men and women of leisure, who had all their time to devote to religion? The Ephesian Church was made up, principally no doubt, of laboring men, artisans--makers in former years, perhaps, of silver shrines for Diana--and women, with, in all probability, families of children, and all the usual pressure of household cares incident to persons in their circumstances. They had evidently been addicted, before their conversion, to low forms of vice, for the Apostle exhorts them "to put away lying," and "let him that stole steal no more," and not to allow "any corrupt communication to proceed out of their mouth." And yet, for just such people as these, with all their cares, and troubles, and perplexities, incident to narrow circumstances, and the necessity of toil for their daily bread--Paul prays that they may be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man; may have Christ to dwell in their hearts by faith; may be rooted and grounded in love; may understand and know the mathematical, solid contents of the love of Christ, and may be filled with all the fulness of God. And then, he doubles and triples, or squares and cubes, all these stupendous blessings that he invokes upon them, by stating that God is able to do more than all that we ask or think; yes, abundantly above all; and even exceeding abundantly above all.

If, then, any of my readers are disposed to think that the blessing is not for them; if they are full of worry and care; if the hindrances are many and great; if the burdens are heavy, and grievous to be borne; let them not yield to discouragement, and cease to ask or seek for the fulness of the blessing, but, let them rather say: 'Just because of cares, and troubles, and toils, and worries, therefore I must have this great salvation. If others can afford to do without it, I cannot.' And so, casting their care--outward and inward--upon Jesus, let them believe, and enter into a sweet rest of soul in Him who careth for them.

And, if any think it a matter of temperament, and that the morbidly melancholic cannot obtain this boon of having an indwelling Saviour to save them from tormenting doubts and fears, let them read these words of David Brainerd:

"Salvation from doubts that I am now and for ever wholly the Lord's. This is the most astonishing triumph of grace over a temperament naturally melancholic, an introspecting, self-anatomizing, and self-accusing style of piety, characteristic of my ancestry."

And these words of Daniel Steele: "Perfect rest from all apprehension of future ill. Salvation from worry is no small thing; especially in the case of one whose views of life are strongly tinged with indigo. I believe that Jesus, who is the Head over all things to His Church, has the program of my best possible future. My only anxiety, moment by moment, is this--Am I now led by the Spirit of God?"

3. Is holiness a condition of heart which is free from temptation? By no means. Anyone who accepts the plain Scriptural statements about the existence and personality of Satan--the real, powerful, intelligent, malignant, spiritual adversary with whom we have to contend--the devil, the liar, the tempter, the deceiver, the accuser, the destroyer, the roaring lion, the old serpent, the false angel of light, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world--will not expect to reach a state in this life in which he shall wholly escape the assaults of such an enemy. The Lord Jesus Christ himself was tempted. Yes, in all points in which His believing, sanctified followers are tempted, and yet without sin. There is, therefore, no sin in being tempted. The sin is in yielding, in cherishing the temptation till it takes root in the desires and the will, resulting finally, it may be, in the sinful word, or the sinful act. The disciple is not above his master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And, therefore, even those whose hearts are perfect in love shall be tempted. But on the other hand, we have the blessed assurance, "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour those that are tempted."

Temptations, or tempting objects, are presented by Satan to the intellect; and it is his purpose that they should pass through the intellect into the sensitive and volitional part of our nature, so as to induce in the appetites, the propensities, the affections, and, finally, the will, a wrong action--wrong either in kind, or in degree. We are sometimes tempted to admit into our hearts, feelings and desires which ought not to exist at all. We are sometimes tempted to a perverted, or excessive indulgence of feelings and desires which, to a certain extent and with proper limitations, may be innocent and proper. In either class of cases we are to ascertain--by a careful study of the Holy Scriptures, or by the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit--just where it is that temptation ends and sin begins; and then we are to give heed to the intimations of a tender and enlightened conscience, which bids us at all hazards turn from the wrong and follow the right.

Conscience is a natural faculty, and given to all mankind. Every responsible human being has a sense of obligation--a belief that he ought to do certain things, and to abstain from doing others. And this feeling of obligation is ever impelling him to a corresponding action. His conscience is always saying to him, Do what you think is right. His ideas of duty are derived principally from education, and are liable to be exceedingly vague and erroneous, especially where there is no outward knowledge of the Gospel or of the requisitions of Scripture. But still his conscience urges him to do what he thinks is right.

From whatever source your convictions of right and wrong are derived, conscience bids you act up to those convictions, and condemns you if you do not do so. A man may do a thing conscientiously, which is, nevertheless, not a right and proper thing to be done. A man may, conscientiously, deprive himself of a thing which God has not forbidden, and which, therefore, is not wrong. The advantage, "much every way" to those who have the oracles of God, over those who have them not, is, so far as the question of duty is concerned, chiefly in this--that when a man acts conscientiously with the open Bible before him, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he not only does what he believes to be God's will, but what is God's will.

It is not only true that the holiest persons will be subject to temptation through life, but it not infrequently happens that their temptations are greater in exact proportion to their holiness; that is to say, as they surrender themselves wholly to the Lord and trust Him for a clean heart, Satan's assaults upon them become not less frequent and less severe, but precisely the reverse. The more you resist his temptations,

the more he will be induced to try his full strength upon you, which it will not be necessary for him to do if you yield easily. The children of Israel were not sent to Canaan the nearest route, because they were not in a condition to resist a determined warlike people such as the Philistines. As they became better acquainted with the Lord's dealings, and learned to trust Him more, He allowed them to meet their enemies in battle. But their severest and most protracted wars were after they came into the land itself.

And so very great temptations are often a sign, not of a low, but of a high state of grace; for if you are beset by "principalities and powers and wicked spirits," it is because you are in "heavenly places." Be not, therefore, discouraged. If the warfare is long and severe, it will, nevertheless, be true if you abide in uninterrupted union with your Commander--the Captain of salvation--that the victory will be constant and complete.

The temptations of a sanctified heart are principally from without. While the "infection of nature"--the remains of carnality--still continue in the heart, there will be a disposition to cherish the temptation and to make a favorable response to the suggestions of the evil one. But when perfect love has been wrought in the soul, when it has been sanctified wholly, then it reckons itself, and, through Christ, realizes itself to be dead to sin, and promptly repels the temptation. There is no Parley the porter, within, to open the castle gates to the enemy without. And yet it is possible still to listen to Satan, and to reason with him until he again injects sin into even a clean heart, just as of old he "beguiled Eve," whose heart was perfectly pure, "by his subtlety."

If the sanctified believer is liable to temptation, it follows that it is possible for him to sin. Sanctification does not destroy a man's moral agency. He is still to choose to be kept and saved, and is kept and saved only while thus choosing. It is possible for him to fall, but possible also--let the Lord be praised--not to fall, because Christ is able to keep him from falling. It is only by abiding in Christ that he can be safe a single moment. Therefore he needs to watch and pray, and that continually.

But those who are wholly the Lord's watch Jesus more than themselves. "Looking unto Jesus" is the attitude of their soul. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? is their constant inquiry. They are on the alert for the slightest intimations of His will, and move in response as the branch moves to and fro at the gentle touch of the breeze. They watch that nothing may separate them from Christ. They watch that they may retain possession of the goodly land. They watch for the approach of the enemy, and fly to the cleft of the Rock.

And do they not pray? Why, they dwell in an atmosphere of prayer. Their life is a continual prayer. They know what it is to pray without ceasing. They perhaps exhibit in their prayers less agonizing and more resting than others, less struggling and more believing, fewer importunate requests and more joyous thanksgivings; but none are oftener on their knees, either in the closet or the public assembly, whether for themselves or others, than the sanctified believers in Jesus.

And none take more delight than they in the prayerful perusal of the Holy Scriptures. They find them all aglow with the doctrine of holiness so precious to their souls. Every means of grace prized by the justified is prized the more when they are sanctified. There is no self-complacent resting in themselves or their attainments, as if there were no further danger and no more need of care. Their rest is not in what they have attained, but in Jesus. It is not that they have no need, but that their need is all supplied in Jesus. It is not that Satan has ceased to tempt them, but that they are victorious in Jesus. It is not that they have no sorrow, but that in Jesus their sorrow is turned into joy. It is not that they have no care, but that they cast

their cares on Jesus. It is not that storms and floods do not come, but that they are fixed upon the Rock--Christ Jesus. They are nothing. Christ is all.

There is one of the devices of Satan which those whose hearts have been made perfect in love ought not to be ignorant of: this is, the suggestion by him of evil and blasphemous thoughts to their minds, and then discouraging them by accusing them of being themselves the authors of these wicked imaginings. Some earnest Christians are thus tempted, and, it may be, specially so when engaged in prayer; all kinds of vile and harassing thoughts coming into their minds and shutting out their communion with God. They are thus brought into great perplexity and discouragement, sometimes being quite ready to doubt whether they are even Christians at all, much more whether they are walking upon the highway of holiness. We can no more avoid these whisperings of Satan than we can avoid hearing the profane conversation of wicked men with whom we may be thrown in contact; and we should learn at once to repel the accusations of our enemy and to cast back his evil suggestions upon himself, fully assuring ourselves that he is the author of them, and not we. The Holy Spirit will be near to aid; and if we have a single eye to Him, He will enable us to distinguish between the thoughts of evil thus injected into our minds by the tempter, and voluntary evil thoughts originated and cherished with the consent of the unsanctified heart, which thus becomes the author of its own temptations. The former may be very harassing, but are not, in themselves, sinful. The same cannot be said of the latter.

4. I shall now group together a number of questions which are not infrequently asked, and endeavor to answer them as fully as their importance may demand, without losing sight of the brevity and conciseness which are so desirable in a work like the present. Some earnest souls ask questions with deep sincerity because they feel a sense of need, and want to know what it is that they are to seek and how to find it. Others apparently ask questions with a view of justifying themselves in not seeking anything. There is an amazing difference in the satisfactoriness of the best and most scriptural answers to questions, when the answers are given to these different and opposite classes of questioners; but I proceed:

A. Is not sanctification received by all Christians co-instantaneously with their conversion?

B. Is not sanctification a gradual work and the result of growth in grace?

C. Can a soul be made holy until the hour and article of death?

D. Was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit confined to Apostolic times?

E. Is not this baptism now received by all Christians at the time of their conversion?

F. Does it not consist of certain miraculous gifts?

G. Is the sanctified believer always full of joy?

H. Does sanctification abolish the fear of death and make its possessor anxious to die?

I. What becomes of a justified believer who is taken away by death, not having been wholly sanctified?

A. In reference to the first question, as sanctification is a definite act of God's grace, there must be a definite time when that act is performed. There is a time when the penitent believing sinner is justified and regenerated, whether that time is manifest to his consciousness or not, and there is a time when the consecrated believer receives a clean heart, whether he is conscious of it at the moment of its reception or

not. In point of fact, so far as the consciousness is concerned, experiences differ. Some begin to seek for a holy heart, and the light gradually dawns upon them, and, at length, without any very distinct perception as to time or manner, they find themselves wholly surrendered to the Lord, and perfectly trusting Him and loving Him supremely. Others, after a definite and voluntary surrender, and an equally definite and voluntary act of faith, are flooded to overflowing with light, and love, and peace, and joy, experiencing, like the believers on the day of Pentecost, a conscious and instantaneous filling of the Spirit and consequent cleansing of the heart.

B. Sanctification, being the work of the Holy Spirit, cannot be the result of growth in grace, There may be a growth before it, and a growth in it. The vessel may be filled today, but it may be so enlarged as to hold more tomorrow. Growth in grace does not consist in an increase of our own virtues; but an increasing sense of God's love to us, begetting a corresponding increase in our love to Him. In order to grow in grace, we must be planted in grace; and grace is the rich, warm, genial soil of God's infinite love.

C. God's command to His people is, "Be ye holy;" and He nowhere tells them that they may put off obedience to this command until the day of their death. Zacharias says that we are to serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives. We are not informed that death is a sanctifier. Jesus is made unto us sanctification. We are sanctified by the Spirit of our God. Sanctification is used in direct connection "with belief of the truth," by Paul, and with "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," by Peter. If a man is sanctified in the hour and article of death, it is because, renouncing all merit and all hope in every earthly thing, he casts himself, in entire surrender and perfect trust, into the arms of Jesus. The Holy Ghost fills him and cleanses him, because then, for the first time, he puts his case wholly in His hands. And would not precisely the same result follow a similar consecration and faith, if these were exercised a year, or ten years, or fifty years before the hour of death?

D and E. The propositions implied in the fourth and fifth questions cannot both be true. If the baptism was confined to Apostolic times, it cannot now be given to all believers, at conversion. But both these questions, we believe, have been sufficiently answered already. Peter told the multitude on the day of Pentecost, that the promise (of the Spirit) was to them, and to their children, "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Moreover, there have been, and are still, many witnesses to the reception of this baptism, in their own conscious experience, and this--in the very great majority of instances at least--at a period subsequent to their conversion.

It is certain that Christ's baptism--or the filling of the Spirit--was not received by the church of the hundred-and-twenty, nor by the Samaritans who accepted the word of God through Philip's preaching, until after their conversion. As this is the baptism that cleanseth; if all receive it at conversion, then all Christians are sanctified at the time when they are born again, and the Church of Christ on earth must consist, in every age, of wholly sanctified members. But the testimony of tens of thousands, who cannot at all doubt their son-ship, who are sure that they have passed from death unto life--through faith in Christ--but are also conscious of the remaining corruption of their hearts, would palpably contradict such an assumption. And, if all Christians are made pure in heart at their conversion, why are these emphatic exhortations addressed to believers, in the Holy Scriptures: "Be ye holy;" "be ye perfect;" "go on to perfection," and "the God of peace sanctify you wholly."

And yet, I must not fail to mention--however paradoxical and inconsistent I may appear to my readers--that every one does, in some sense, receive the Spirit, and is, in some sense, made holy at the time of his conversion. Whosoever receives the Son, has the Father, and the Spirit also. No man can say that Jesus

is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And, whosoever has been forgiven, or justified--as has been remarked elsewhere--begins to be holy. But, this reception of the Holy Spirit which is in connection with conversion, is not at all that baptism and filling of the Spirit to which believers are called. And this partial cleansing which occurs at conversion, is only the beginning of what is consummated when--by Christ's baptism--the believer is sanctified wholly.

F. The gifts of the Spirit, whether consisting of the power to work miracles of any kind, or in something less wonderful, were, and are, given to every man severally, as He will. They are given to some and withheld from others; but the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is the in-coming and indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the believer. And, if He first gives us Himself, we can be content--so far as other and minor gifts are concerned--to receive what He gives, and want what He withholds; though still not neglecting to "covet earnestly the best."

G. Holiness is undoubtedly a rich field. There is much joy in it. He who is holy cannot be miserable. The Saviour spoke certain comforting words to His disciples, that your joy might be full. We are told to "rejoice evermore;" that "the joy of the Lord is your strength;" that, "your joy no man taketh from you." But, it is not to be understood that the joy of the sanctified believer is unceasing rapture, or ecstasy. It is rather characterized by a feeling of quiet peace; a rest of soul, the tranquility of a spirit poised in harmony with God's will.

Perhaps a distinction may justly be drawn between happiness and joy. This distinction, if it has a real existence, may be stated as follows, viz: joy--and the same is true of peace, which may indeed be regarded as one form of joy--arises from the inner-being, welling up from the heart itself; while happiness is more of an outward feeling, having reference to the circumstances under which we are placed at the time. Holy joy is found in communion with God; in eating the hidden manna; in dwelling in the secret place of the Most High; in abiding under the shadow of the Almighty; in having the mind stayed on God. Happiness, on the other hand, is found in agreement between our wills and our surroundings. It very often happens that we cannot bring circumstances to our wills, and then, the only resource we have, in order to avoid unhappiness, is to bring our wills to circumstances. God's hand is in the circumstances and occurrences of our daily life, as it is in everything else, and we must learn to recognize it there.

Events are providences, and our Heavenly Father either permits or causes every thing that happens to us. To see, in even the heaviest calamities, a manifestation of God's will, and to bow, in humble resignation, to that will; these are the means of obtaining relief from the pressure.

"Thy will be done! 'Tis this which rolls

Their agony from suffering souls."

If the above remarks are entitled to consideration, it will follow that joy, or peace, being an inward principle, is more permanent; while happiness, depending upon outward circumstances, is more transitory and uncertain. Bearing in mind the distinction already given between the two terms, we might say then, a man's happiness may be disturbed, and even greatly disturbed, by many things which do not at all disturb his inward peace or joy.

The Christian--and even the holiest Christian--is subject, like other men, to the restrictions and limitations of humanity. He hungers and thirsts; he suffers physical pain; he meets with afflictions and bereavements, crosses and disappointments; he is tried and tempted; he finds many occasions of sorrow and mourning,

just as other men do, and he feels them as other men feel them. But, if his mind is kept fixed upon God, while these agitations may greatly affect his outward enjoyment, they do not disturb his inward rest. Every cistern may fail; one by one the sources of his earthly hopes and enjoyments may be cut off; prop after prop upon which he has leaned may be forced from under him; he may be bruised, and scathed, and peeled, but still the language of his heart is, not only, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," but even "I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." In the midst of sufferings and trials, labors and distresses, persecutions and afflictions, such as have scarcely been the lot of any other man, the Apostle could say, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." Outward commotions did not disturb the Sabbath keeping of his soul.

When storms come down upon the Atlantic, when the sea roars and is troubled, when men's hearts are failing them for fear, and the waves are threatening to overwhelm the frail vessel that is tossed up and down upon them, even then but a few feet below the surface all is calm as a summer's sun. At the very time that the tempest is raging so fearfully above,

"Then, far below in the peaceful sea,

The purple mullet and goldfish rove,

Where the waters murmur tranquilly

Through the bending twigs of the coral grove."

And thus the severest trials that are permitted to overtake the sanctified believer are but surface storms, which, however terrible they may be without, are scarcely able to agitate at all the inward tranquility of a soul that is anchored in God.

Instances occur not infrequently of individuals experiencing quiet rest of soul, and even joy of heart, while enduring intense physical pain. "In the most peaceful state of every corporeal function," says Dr. Abercrombie, "passion, remorse, and anguish may rage within, and while the body is racked by the most frightful tortures, the mind may repose in tranquility and hope." And if physical pain is entirely compatible with inward peace and joy, so also are sufferings, afflictions, and sorrows which are mental and not physical.

Tribulations are a part of the legacy left us by our Master. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He himself was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." At one time He said in the depth of His mysterious anguish, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But even in that dark hour, love triumphed. While He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him, He also said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." In the hour of intensest agony there was yet no resistance to His Father's will. And thus we learn that affliction and sorrow of the most poignant character are entirely compatible with perfect love, while rebellion is not thus compatible.

Sanctification, then, does not purchase for its possessor exemption from trial and suffering, neither does it so blunt his sensibilities that he shall not feel them, and feel them keenly. And if he looks at his surroundings he will very often find feelings and emotions arising in his mind which are very much the reverse of joyful; but if he looks unto Jesus, in Him he will have peace, and the tender exhortation will come home to him, "Let not your heart be troubled" Sorrow is one thing, trouble is another.

"His blessed angel, Sorrow--she hath walked

For years beside me; and we two have talked
As chosen friends together.
Thus I know Trouble and Sorrow are not near of kin.
Trouble distrusteth God, and ever wears
Upon her brow the seal of anxious cares.
But Sorrow oft hath deepest peace within.
She sits with Patience in perpetual calm,
Waiting till heaven shall send the healing balm."

Joy, like love, regarded as a religious affection, can only exist in connection with faith. It is those who are justified by faith who have peace with God--the sweet rest of forgiven sin; and it is those who are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith, who enjoy the still deeper and fuller soul-rest of perfect love, or a clean heart. Hence, whether in judging of our present religious state or in seeking after a better one, we need to look more to our faith than to our feelings, and more to Christ than to either. Right feelings are by no means to be undervalued, nor considered of no account in the believer's experience, but right feelings are the result of right faith. Where there is little faith there will be little love and little joy. Where there is much faith there will be much love and much joy. Where there is assurance of faith there will be perfect love and fulness of joy.

If we make joy only the object of our seeking, we shall be very likely to fail in finding even that. Not joy, but holiness--not feeling, but faith--not happiness, but Christ is what we need. And if we have Him we shall have all the happiness and all the joy that are best for us. The child that is not satisfied without being fed all the time on sweetmeats has very inadequate conceptions of a parent's love. To use in my own words an illustration borrowed from another, the man who is governed by his feelings only, is like a sailing vessel whose moving power is without, which is sometimes getting on rapidly, sometimes very slowly, sometimes not at all, and whose course is a zig-zag one towards her destined haven. But the man whose governing principle is faith, is like one of those magnificent steamers which cross the Atlantic, whose moving power is within, and which pursue a steady, rapid, and undeviating course alike through storm and calm, through cloud and sunshine.

H. In entire sanctification the believer is brought into soul-union with Jesus, and this must take away the fear of death, so far as the future judgment is concerned. There is no condemnation, all slavish fear is removed, while there still remains an awful, reverential, filial fear--a fear of offending our Heavenly Father, or of grieving His Holy Spirit. But the mere physical fear of dissolution and lying down in the grave is not necessarily removed.

The holy man is yet a man with all his physical and mental infirmities still existing, and, according to his peculiar temperament, may have much or little dread of death as death. There is, doubtless, even here, in many cases, a remarkable deliverance. I have heard a dear friend, who is wholly the Lord's, say that he was entirely free from the fear of death. "If," said he, "an angel from heaven should tell me that I was to die within ten minutes, I should have nothing to do but write a letter to my wife." But such is not always the case. Nor is such entire exemption from the mere physical shrinking from death a necessary test of entire

sanctification.

It is equally true also that the sanctified believer is not always anxious to die. While holiness is a preparation for dying, it is also a preparation for living and the needed qualification for successful labor in the cause of Christ. And when we see how white the fields are for harvest and how few are the laborers, we ought to esteem it a great privilege to live and work, and, if need be, to suffer for Jesus, yea, and count ourselves immortal till our work is done.

Let not the sanctified Christian who is strong and in the midst of labors, however abundant, grow weary and be in haste to quit the field and put on his wings, nor, on the other hand, allow himself to be brought under bondage by any undue fear of death. Let no one spend his time in crossing bridges before he comes to them, or in seeking dying grace to live by. The point is to be able to say with Paul, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, living or dying we are the Lord's." "What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Work while it is day, and then when the night cometh, dying grace will not be withheld.

I. A justified child of God cannot be lost; an unsanctified soul cannot be saved. If, therefore, a man who is walking in the light of justification and growing in grace, is suddenly cut off, there can be no doubt that the blood of Jesus avails to cleanse such a soul from the remaining stains of inward corruption, to sanctify it wholly, and to give it that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is by the precious blood of Christ also that the souls of infants, idiots, and irresponsible persons who are taken away by death are cleansed from inbred sin.

But while the justified believer may be, and, doubtless, often is thus sanctified in the hour of death, this fact furnishes no sufficient reason for any Christian who is made to realize, by whatever means, that God requires of him and makes it his privilege to be holy now, to turn away from it and voluntarily to postpone it until the approach of death. He cannot neglect or reject the added grace that is offered him without incurring a grave responsibility. To continue in known disobedience to God because we may trust in His mercy at last is a "presumptuous sin." From such let us pray with David that the Lord may keep us back.

5. We do not find in the Holy Scriptures any countenance given to the idea that men are to keep their religion to themselves. There is scarcely a word indicating expression that David does not employ in showing forth the goodness of the Lord. He will pray, he will praise, he will bless, he will talk, he will tell, he will utter, he will declare, he will sing, he will shout, he will cry, he will call, he will give thanks, he will lift up his voice, he will make a joyful noise unto the Lord. In a few instances, it is true, probably for prudential reasons, the Saviour forbade those who had been healed by Him to make it known, but in others, He expressly commanded them to tell what great things the Lord had done for them; and when one only of the ten lepers returned to give Him glory, there must have been an implied censure in His question, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?"

God's people in every age of the world are His witnesses, and they are forbidden to withhold their testimony. They must not hide their light under a bushel. Not by their life and example only, but by their words are they to confess Him and declare themselves on His side. Such at least must be at times their privilege, and it would seem to be a duty as well. As they are to take with them words and turn to the Lord, so with the mouth are they to show forth His praise. "We cannot but speak," says Peter, "the things which we have seen and heard." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," says Paul, "and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth

unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Interpreting the text in the most natural manner, it would be difficult to see why it is not as necessary to confess with the mouth as to believe with the heart.

In the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, we find the following instructive passage, "And it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruits of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shall put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to put His name there. And thou shalt go to the Priest that shall be in those days and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our Fathers for to give us."

At first view this seems very remarkable. It would be regarded as very strange if one who has been known all his life as a resident of London should arise in a public assembly and say: I profess this day that I am a citizen of London. But this profession of the Israelite, made to the Lord in the presence of the Priest, and we may well suppose with more or less publicity, was not without an object. The Lord had promised that the land of Canaan should be possessed by the descendants of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and the ceremony prescribed by the great Lawgiver was a verbal declaration that the Lord had been as good as His word. It honored Jehovah by setting forth in words His faithfulness to His own covenant.

And if any of my kind readers have been delivered as from Egypt, if they have escaped from the house of bondage and lifted up--ah! Did they do so?--the song of thanksgiving, or in any way the voice of praise, and if they have come up to the land of soul-rest and entered it at Kadesh Barnea, or been led about by a long and toilsome march through the wilderness, and at length have followed their invincible Captain across the Jordan and have entered upon their inheritance, will they not declare that He is faithful that promised? Will they not profess this day that they have come into the land, and are dwelling in the land which the Lord their God giveth them?

How instructive is the history of the woman who thought to be healed without anybody knowing it! She glided through the crowd with a heart full of faith, for she said, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be whole." She touched the hem of His robe, and immediately felt in her body that she was healed of her plague. So far so good. But mark what followed. The Saviour stopped--all the thronging multitude who were following Him to the house of Jairus stopped--why? "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Somebody has been blessed, and whoever it is must tell it. And it was not till she had fallen down before Him and declared unto Him "before all the people" for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately, that she received the comforting words, "Daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

Jesus expressly tells us that them that confess Him before men, He will confess before His Father and the angels. And how is that confession to be made? Will He only confess them by His actions? Will He only show by His conduct and bearing towards them that they are His? Ah! we read that the King shall say unto them, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Yes, for ever magnified be His blessed and holy name, He will confess His people with His mouth! And shall they think it too hard a thing to do to confess Him with their mouth while here on earth? Shall they be ashamed of Him or of His words before men?

"Ashamed of Jesus! just as soon

Let midnight be ashamed of noon!"

But are we not told, "By their fruits ye shall know them?" Yes; and what are the fruits? Not only the fruit of the daily life and walk, but the fruit of the lips as well. God's people are a royal priesthood, and every individual Christian is a priest in His kingdom. If a priest, he must have somewhat to offer. And what shall it be? The expiatory and propitiatory offerings of the Levitical priesthood were abolished for ever when Christ bowed His head upon the cross and said, "It is finished."

It is, therefore, no longer the bleeding sacrifice of the old law that the Christian priest is called upon to offer. It still remains true, however, that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit--a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." And by our great High Priest we are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually--even the fruit of the lips, giving thanks unto His name; but to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Therefore, beloved reader, let us remember that the good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the good fruit is every good word, as well as every good work.

We read of certain "chief rulers" who believed on Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Such are found in all ages of the Church. If Christians at all, they are very timid and feeble Christians. They do not openly and boldly declare their pedigree. They are not strong and efficient soldiers in the Lamb's army. They do not let their light shine, and thus bring others to glorify God. Motives of supposed self-interest hold them back from making a direct and public avowal of their allegiance to Christ. And the tendency of this vacillating course is to render them obscure and perplexed in their own experience, and a cause of obscurity and perplexity to those around them. It is a difficult matter to know where to place them, and on whose side they are to be enrolled.

How impressive are the Saviour's words, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Now there is a particular danger in our day of "being put out of the synagogue" to the man who confesses that God for Christ's sake has given him a clean heart, and this, added to a natural reserve, a fear of falling, and so bringing reproach upon the cause of holiness, and various other motives, hinder many consecrated believing Christians from confessing the grace of entire sanctification, even when they humbly hope and believe that the Holy Ghost has wrought that grace in their souls.

More persons testify to having lost the evidence of perfect love from failing to confess what God had done for their souls than from any other cause. John Fletcher, of Madely, informs us that he was in this manner deprived of his evidences to a conscious cleansing no less than four times. Again, I say, we must neither be ashamed of Christ nor of His words.

But this confession ought always to be a confession of Christ. Everything that savors of Pharisaical righteousness, or boasting, or self-exaltation, should be excluded from it; otherwise it were better not made at all. Encompassed as we are with infirmities, and liable always to sins of ignorance, no man dare say, "I have lived a year, or five years, or ten years, without sinning." Rather will he say, with the deepest humility, "My Deliverer has proved Himself mighty to save, and able to keep. To His name be the praise." Instead of saying, "I am perfect, I am holy, I am sanctified;" it is better, safer, wiser to say, "Christ is my sanctification. The blood cleanseth me." Or, with George Fox, "Christ, my Saviour, hath taken away my sin." The testimony should keep ourselves out of sight, and honour the Saviour only. It is not what I have done, but what Jesus has done for me. It is not what I have attained, but what Jesus has given me. It is

the nothingness of self, and the glory of God, that are to be promoted by the confession, if it have any value.

The following is from Isaac Pennington: "Now, thus having met with the true way, I cannot be silent--true love and pure life stirring in me and moving me--but am necessitated to testify of it to others. As God draweth, in any respect, oh, give up in faithfulness to Him. Despise the shame. He that will come into the New Covenant, must come into the obedience of it."

Reader, these are true sayings. Let them have their due place in thy heart.

One word more about confession; and it is a word of caution. If anyone who has enjoyed the fullness of the blessing, and has witnessed to Jesus as his sanctification, finds his experience grown dim, his faith grown weak, his love grown cold; if he no longer realizes--even at intervals--the witness of the Spirit to his conscious cleansing; if, in short, he has lost the evidences of a clean heart, let him not confess, as a present experience, that which is only the memory of a former one. In other words, if he has ceased to possess perfect love, let him cease also to profess it.

But, on the other hand, such an individual should not be unduly discouraged, nor give up in despair, as if all were lost. That would be giving place to the devil. Let him humble himself, and seek to know if he does not know--how he has lost the inestimable jewel of a holy heart; and, in renewed consecration and trust, let him beseech the Lord, once more to sanctify him wholly, to set his feet on the highway of holiness; to keep him from falling, and to establish his goings. While he sincerely mourns over his lapsed condition, let him nevertheless say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy. If I fall, I shall arise." "With the Lord helping me, I will try again."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dougan-clark/general-observations-on-the-subject-of-holiness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net