

Holiness to the Lord

by Edward Davies

To retain the blessing of entire sanctification, one must cherish a spirit of watchfulness, cultivate a spirit of faith, and live as in the presence of God.

Scripture: Romans 1:17, Galatians 6:9, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, James 1:22, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Peter 5:8, 2 Peter 3:18

Topics: "Entire Sanctification", "Christian Holiness"

Description

Edward Davies preaches on the importance of retaining the blessing of entire sanctification, emphasizing the need for constant vigilance, unwavering faith, and a life filled with good works and prayer. He highlights the significance of living in the presence of God, making a timely profession of faith, and continually seeking to grow in holiness. Davies also stresses the challenges that come with maintaining this blessing, including facing temptations from Satan, opposition from lukewarm believers, and trials of faith and patience.

Transcript

"Preserve you blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

How may we retain this blessing of entire sanctification? This is a question of infinite importance, and should be answered as in the sight of God. Supposing that you have now the exalted happiness, the perfect humility, the perfect love, and the witness of your own spirit, and the direct witness of the Spirit of the Lord, that you are fully saved from all sin; that Christ fills and rules your heart; it is of eternal value to know how you may keep this heavenly treasure. Alas! that so many lose it and become slain witnesses.

1. You must always cherish a spirit of watchfulness. Holiness is like a garden without weeds; but if we do not watch, Satan will sow tares that will spring up and trouble us. Holiness is like a well-regulated house; it requires constant care to keep it in perfect order. It is like a beautiful white robe, that must be constantly and carefully watched, lest it become spotted and defiled in this filthy world. It is like a sharp-edged instrument, that will soon be blunted without much care. It is like a well-defended city, with the enemies all outside; but every avenue must be constantly guarded with vigilant care, for the wily foe will seek to retake it.

"Leave no unguarded place--"

No weakness of the soul:

Take every virtue, every grace,

And fortify the whole."

Watch your thoughts, that no evil thought shall find a lodgment in the soul. This may lead to an unholy desire, and this may lead to a sinful volition, and then the sin is completed, and the result is a sad defeat; a wounded conscience, a blushing face, and sad cause for repentance.

Watch the first ruffle of the feelings, and stay your mind at once on God, that he may keep you in perfect peace. Watch the first temptation to speak an angry, fretful, peevish, or unkind word; for all these little things will have a great influence. "Trifles make perfection," said Napoleon, "but perfection is no trifle."

2. Steadfastly set your soul against the shadow of a doubt as to your acceptance with God. Satan will shake your confidence if he can, for he knows full well that you can stand only by faith, and that as soon as you give way to doubt, you fall from your steadfastness, dishonor God, and forfeit his smile.

3. On the other hand, cultivate a spirit of faith. Not only believe steadfastly on God, and so keep open the communication between your soul and God, but cultivate, cherish, and foster the spirit of faith; believe with all the faith you have, and cry out, "Lord, increase my faith." Believe when you read, when you pray, when you lie down and when you rise up, when you go out or when you come in. Yours must literally be a life of faith, morning, noon, and night, and in all the spaces between, you must fully rely on the covenant-keeping God. Lady Maxwell says, "The Lord teaches me that it is by simple faith alone that I can either obtain, retain, or increase with regard to any gospel blessing."

Satan may tell you how unfaithful you have formerly been, and how unworthy you now are, and how presumptive it is in you to think that you may have so large a blessing. This is a subtle temptation, and you must be on your guard, and put up your "shield of faith," which will surely quench this fiery dart of the enemy. Tell him you are not blessed because you have been faithful, or because you are unworthy, but because you have fulfilled the conditions of this great blessing, and that you have received it as a free gift. Let your faith be so steady and constant that you can say, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

4. Your works must accord with your faith. "Faith without works is dead, being alone," says the apostle. If you have given yourself up to serve God fully, you will ever be asking, "What wilt thou have me to do?" And you will hold yourself ready for any post of duty in any part of the world, for any portion of time. "Not my will, but thine be done," at all times, and in all places; in the choice of your occupation, in the style and quality of your wearing apparel; yea, even in eating and drinking, you will do the will of God; and in all things you may have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man," and so you shall never be brought into condemnation.

This will often call for the exercise of self-denial. You will see others indulging themselves in various ways, but you can not do it! You have engaged to belong to "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Self-indulgence would at once sap your strength and destroy our confidence. Wesley says, "Be exemplary in all things, particularly in outward things (as in dress); in little things; in laying out your money (avoiding all needless expense); in dress, steady seriousness, and in the solidity of your conversation."

Your whole life must be filled up with labor for God's glory, "for grace flies a vacuum as well as nature, and the devil fills what God does not fill." Keep yourself fully engaged in doing good, and so will your works help your faith, and when you go to God for a favor, you may have confidence that he hears you. "Be always employed! Lose no shred of time; gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." Thus-

"By holy life and temper show,

That you your heavenly Master know,

And Serve with heart sincere."

5. Live as in the presence of God!

It is said of the sainted Chrysostom that "he preached as though he was surrounded by God and holy angels." This gave him an inspiration which you need, to help you retain the fullness; this will help you to act aright this purity of heart will help you to God, and to obey him as the angels do in heaven.

6. Another indispensable requisite to maintain this blessing is, that you make a timely and prudent profession of it. You can never eat this precious morsel alone. "Come near, all ye that fear the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul." You must not only tell the truth in the case, but the whole truth, all that God hath done for you. You need not fear to use the very language of Scripture in making this confession, "that you love God with all your heart," or that "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin," or that you feel that "perfect love that casteth out fear." These are expressions none too strong to use in proclaiming this great salvation.

But whatever language you use, let it be in the spirit of meekness.

"Speak of it when called thereto in the most inoffensive manner possible. Avoid all magnificent, pompous words," says Wesley. In the deep humiliation of your soul, and with a single eye to his glory, publish this fullness to the world. Self congratulation is out of the question, Christ is all in all.

"His only righteousness I show, His saving truth (power) proclaim."

Sound discretion must be used as to the time and circumstances of this confession. Pearls are not to be cast before swine. What is proper at one time is improper at another. "I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me." Yet, sometimes, God may call upon you to speak of this fullness in the great congregation, that sinners may bear, and fear, and trust in the Lord. "And this testimony will often sway the multitude as though the breath of God was in it."

Still, the loudest profession of holiness is the daily godly deportment, the deadness to the world, in its spirit and customs. "A calm and heavenly frame amid all the provocations of life, and a deadness to the charms and fashions of the world, will be a loud profession of holiness."

If, at any time, your conduct or spirit has been inconsistent with this exalted state, and candid men have had reason to doubt your state, a sudden profession of the blessing may prejudice their minds against you, and the profession you make, and the blessing you profess. Take a new plunge into the purple flood,

"And rise to all the life of God."

"And if, at any time, you fall from what you now are, if you should feel again pride or unbelief, or any temper from which you are now delivered, do not deny, do not hide, do not disguise it at all, at the peril of your soul. At all events, go to one in whom you can confide, and speak just what you feel. God will enable him to speak a word in season, which shall be health to your soul. And surely he will again lift up your head, and cause the holiness that have been broken to rejoice." -- Wesley.

7. If you would retain that degree of perfect love that you now have, you must seek after more. You must grow in holiness, or decline in it. This is too plain to need argument, and yet this is the secret of so many backsliding from it. They try to stand still, and soon go back. It is your blessed privilege to be

"Changed from glory unto glory,"

till in heaven you take your place.

"Till you cast your crowns before Him,

Lost in wonder, love, and praise."

Wesley speaks of Mrs. Parsons, "As a glorious witness, full of salvation, showing how impossible it is to retain pure love without growing therein."

8. If you would keep this blessing you must daily renew your consecration. Lay your all anew on the divine altar, "that sanctifieth the gift." Yea, let it ever remain there. Still say,-

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,

That vow renewed shall daily hear,

Till in life's latest hour I vow,

And bless in death a Lord so dear."

9. You must labor to persuade others to secure this same blessing. This we shall do as long as we maintain it ourselves, and it will be a sad sign of decline when we do not labor in this direction. Scatter the holy fire, that it may burn more and more!

10. You must foster and cherish a spirit of constant prayer. This praying spirit comes with the blessing, and must be cultivated as long as we would retain the blessing. Holiness implies it and requires it.

"Pray, without ceasing, pray,

(Your Captain gives the word),

His summons cheerfully obey,

And call upon the Lord.

To God your every want

In instant prayer display;

Pray always; pray, and never faint,

Pray, without ceasing, pray."

11. If you would retain this fullness you must abide the consequences of its profession.

(1) Satan may tempt you far more severely. You know he tempted Christ forty days and forty nights, and he will harass and perplex you if he can, and all who hear the blessed image of Christ. Thank God, you need not fear the conflict.

"By all hell's host withstood,

We all hell's host o'erthrow,

And conquering through Jesus' blood,

We on to conquer go."

(2) You will meet with opposition from that part of the Church which is not in sympathy with this subject. They may say you "are zealous overmuch;" that "you make yourself peculiar;" "attract attention;" "why not be like the rest of the professors;" why make so much ado about religion;" "why not take it easy, -- it will be just as well in the end." You must be ready to meet and withstand these Laodicean cries, from well-meaning, but lukewarm professors. Reply, like Nehemiah, "We are doing a great work, and can not come down, Why should the work cease, while we leave it, and come down to you?" These things will exercise your charity, but this heavenly virtue will bear the trial, if you instantly look to God. You will feel a love for your weak brethren, and will, by no means, cast them away.

(3) Your faith will be tried. You may think, When you first obtain the blessing you can just persuade any one to seek and obtain it, and you begin to labor for it; but you may find, after much toil, that you have but little fruit, and you will be tempted to be discouraged and cease to labor, and so cease to maintain the blessing. Mark the word of the Lord to you, "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." Let your faith grow stronger in the trial, and you shall see the desire of your heart.

(4) Your patience will be put to a severe test. There are many petty annoyances in every-day life. Many things pressing upon you at the same time, and the temptation will be to become fretful, but this can never be allowed, not even in feeling, so long as you keep your soul full of the calmness of perfect love. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." There is the cure for worldly cares; let the mind be stayed on God; let the heart be lifted up in instant prayer -- "Lord, help me! Lord, keep me!" Natural disposition is no excuse for impatience, for grace can conquer nature. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Dear reader, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

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