

Causes of Vacillation

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The main cause of vacillation in the Christian life is often a lack of faith, which can lead to distrust of God's ability to keep us from falling.

Scripture: Psalm 125:1, Proverbs 16:18, Romans 12:12, 1 Corinthians 10:12, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holiness"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin preaches about the reasons why people fail to maintain a steady experience in holiness, emphasizing the importance of heart conditions, faith, watchfulness, self-humiliation, resignation, carelessness in outward life, pressing forward, and prayer. He highlights that vacillation in holiness can be caused by lack of faith in God's ability to keep us, failure to watch for spiritual attacks, reluctance to humble oneself, resistance to self-denial, and neglect of earnest prayer in the Spirit.

Transcript

The question is often asked, "Why is it that people fail to keep a steady experience in holiness?" In answering in a general way we remark that in the things of grace people get all they live for. Holiness resides in the heart, and, as a consequence, the causes of vacillation may be found in heart conditions, or in things that influence those conditions. If your experience has been vacillating possibly you may find the secret of this unsteadiness in some of the following observations. If so, thank God for the discovery, and turn it at once to practical account.

Probably the greater number of vacillating professors of holiness never attained this rich experience. They have repeatedly gone forward in some holiness meeting or convention, consecrated themselves to God, repented of numerous shortcomings, and been greatly blest; but in a short time they have been down again. Then they say, "I have lost the experience of holiness," are reproached by others for their lack of faith and called doubting Thomases. But all this time there has been a questioning in their minds as to whether they really got what they thought they did.

The real experience may be lost, however -- from lack of faith, from failure to trust God implicitly. Our faith must "stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." But there come trying circumstances, when all hell seems to surround the soul; then there enters the heart a distrust of God's ability to keep from falling. It is the devil's business to inoculate us with this insidious thing, if possible; but remember the promise, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth

forever" (Psa. 125: 1). Then hold still, and if you are really sanctified, you will come out with flying colors, knowing more of God than before. But where faith fails there is generally some other reason further back that is the cause of its failure, and we should be strictly honest and lay the blame at the right place.

Another sure cause of unsteadiness is a lack of watchfulness. The devil is always on the alert, always looking for an opportunity to take the citadel of "Man-soul" by storm. To offset this Jesus said, "Watch." We are fighting with an unseen adversary. We must watch in every direction and all the time. A great many become careless for a time, and in the unguarded moment are overtaken by the enemy and fall.

Still another occasion of vacillation is the lack of self-humiliation under all circumstances. We say lack of self-humiliation, for though pride be gone, yet there may arise circumstances, or a complication of circumstances, under which if we refuse to humble ourselves, though clearly in the right, we are, to say the least, in danger. Every change of circumstances should be seized by the sanctified soul as a fresh reason to go down before God. Resentment of slander, reproof, correction, insult, or any trying thing, leaves the door open and sin enters. But in all these conditions, and in success as well, the soul should constantly abase itself before God.

A failure of resignation may forfeit the experience. Under trying circumstances the temptation would be to rebel, and force our way out; but the resigned soul saves itself many perplexities by holding still under the trial. If the sky is black and lowering, the sun will shine all the brighter after the clouds roll away. Madam Guyon says if we fight our temptations, they will only grow worse, but if we let them alone and trust God they will soon leave."

Carelessness in respect to the outward life is another source of vacillation. Bramwell's advice was, "Reject everything in the present that would in the least draw you from the love of God." God desires that we glorify him in our lives. As never before, the soul when sanctified avoids the appearance of evil. He holds himself to the clean, Bible line, and makes no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Self-denial is his rule of life, and very often the secret of unsteadiness may be traced to some self-indulgence that grieves the Holy Spirit. We should constantly remember that even a little inattention to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit will dull the edge of grace. When the soul is clean, it more readily discerns evil than before. The first heavy feeling should be heeded and the mistakes which occasions it rectified, or the conscience will lose its tenderness and then it is not very far to the bottom.

A failure to press earnestly forward will deaden the soul. We must not think that because we are cleansed there is no more for us. The bread made this week is good, but it will mold next week; so more must be made. When God especially blesses us there is danger of getting elated and stopping to glory in the blessing instead of pressing on to greater victories, and thus we lose the freshness and sweetness the blessing was intended to impart. Bramwell says, "Never imagine that you have arrived at the summit. No; see God in all things, and you will see no end."

But the one great occasion of vacillation is a lack of prayer. It is needless to quote the many scriptures that exhort us to this blessed exercise. Let this one suffice: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

"Prayer makes the darkened clouds withdraw,

Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;

Gives exercise to faith and love;

Brings every blessing from above.

"Restraining prayer we cease to fight;

Prayer keeps the Christian's armor bright;

And Satan trembles when he sees

the weakest saint upon his knees."

A great many persons go through mere forms of prayer, and then wonder why they do not reach soul victory; but life of prayer in the Spirit is ever a victorious life.

Other causes of vacillation might be mentioned, but the heart that will be true to God will discover the treacherous wiles of the devil intended for his overthrow. He will also be quick to discern the gentle leadings of the Holy Spirit, drawing him to a life of deeper devotion and of holy yearning, and to an ever-deepening self-abasement. As a consequence he will be filled more and more with the burning love of God. O Grace! where dost thou end? With cords of love thou dost draw our willing souls into thyself, renewing us evermore in the image of thy divine Author. Glory to God for this matchless fullness!

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