

What Is Holiness?

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Holiness is a clean heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells, filling it with pure, tender, and constant love to God and man.

Scripture: John 17:16, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle addresses the concept of holiness and sanctification, explaining that true holiness is not merely the absence of sin but the presence of God's love in our hearts. He emphasizes that holiness involves being like God in nature, characterized by purity, love, and separation from the world. Brengle illustrates that while we may feel inadequate, the Bible assures us that we can be like Jesus in our actions and spirit. He concludes that holiness is about having a clean heart filled with love, which is the birthright of all believers. The sermon encourages believers to seek a deeper sanctification to fully embody God's nature.

Transcript

A number of years ago, before many of the young people for whom this book is written were born, a girl asked me, 'What is this sanctification, or holiness, that people are talking so much about?'

She had heard the experience testified to, and talked and preached about, for nearly a year, until I thought that, of course, she understood it. Her question surprised and almost discouraged me, but I rallied, and asked, 'Have you a bad temper?'

'Oh, yes,' said she, 'I have a temper like a volcano.'

'Sanctification,' I replied, 'is to have that bad temper taken out.' That definition set her thinking, and did her good; but it was too narrow. If I had said, 'Sanctification is to have temper and all sin taken away, and the heart filled with love to God and man,' that would have done, for that is sanctification. that is holiness. It is, in our measure, to be made like God. It is to be made a 'partaker of the Divine nature.' (2 Peter i. 4)

A spark from the fire is like the fire. The tiniest twig on the giant oak, or the smallest branch of the vine, has the nature of the oak or the vine, and is in that respect like the oak or the vine. A drop of water on the end of your finger from the ocean is like the ocean: not in its size, of course, for the big ships cannot float upon it, nor the big fishes swim in it; but it is like the ocean in its essence, in its character, in its nature.

Just so, a holy person is like God. Not that he is infinite as God is; he does not know everything; he has not all power and wisdom as God has; but he is like God in his nature. He is good and pure, and loving and just, in the same way that God is.

Holiness, then, is conformity to the nature of God. It is likeness to God, as He is revealed in Jesus.

But someone will cry out, 'Impossible! We are poor sinful creatures. We cannot be like Jesus. He was Divine. Show me a man like Jesus Christ.'

Well, now, let us be patient, and keep quiet, and go to the Bible, and see what that says about the matter before we further define holiness. What did Jesus Himself say? Listen!

1. In speaking of the separation of His disciples from the world, Jesus says, 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' And again, 'As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.' (John xvii. 16, 18.) We are, then, to be like Jesus in separation from the world, Jesus was in the world, but He was not of the world. He took no pleasure in its wicked ways. He was not spoiled at all by its proud, sinful, selfish spirit, While he worked and associated with bad people to do them good, yet He was always separate from them in spirit.

One of our dear, pure Rescue Officers went to a house full of bad women, to see a sick girl, and while she was there the health authorities declared the girl's sickness to be smallpox, and they sealed up the place, and the Officer was shut in for weeks among those poor lost women. She was in an evil place, but she was not of it. Her pure spirit was utterly opposed to the spirit of sin that ruled there. So Jesus was in the world, but not of it; and in the same way, holy people are so changed, that while they are in the world, they are not of it. They belong to heaven, and are but strangers and pilgrims doing all the good they can while passing through this world to their Father's house, their heavenly home. They are separate from the world.

2. The Apostle John, in speaking of those who expect to see Jesus, and to be like Him in Heaven, says, 'And everyone that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' That is a lofty standard of purity, for there was no impurity in Jesus. He allowed no unclean habits. He indulged in no impure thoughts or desires. He used no unkind words. He kept Himself pure in all things. So we are to be pure in heart and in life, as He was.

3. Again, Jesus said, in speaking of God's kindness and love for unjust and evil people, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'

Again, He says, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.' How? According to what standard? 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' We are, then, to be like Jesus in love to God and to all men, even to our enemies, but especially to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

4. In speaking of Himself, Jesus Says, 'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.' (John xiv, 11.) And then He says of His disciples, 'At that day' (the day of Pentecost, when the Comforter comes), 'ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me, and I in you.' (John xiv. 20.) We are, then, to be like Jesus by having God dwelling in us.

So we see that the Bible teaches that we can be like Jesus. We are to be like Him in our separation from the world, in purity, in love, and in the fullness of the Spirit. This is holiness.

This work was begun in you when you were converted, You gave up your sins. You were in some measure separated from the world; the love of God was in some degree shed abroad in your heart, and you felt that God was with you. But unless you have been sanctified wholly, you also feel that there are yet roots of bitterness within: quickness of temper, stirrings of pride, too great a sensitiveness to praise or blame, shame of the Cross, love of ease, worldly-mindedness, and the like. These must be taken away before your heart can be made clean, and love to God and man made perfect, and the Holy Spirit have all His way in you. When this is done, you will have the experience which the Bible calls holiness, and which The Salvation Army rightly teaches is the birthright of all God's dear children.

Holiness, then, for you and for me, is not maturity, but purity: a clean heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells, filling it with pure, tender, and constant love to God and man.

There is a plant in South America, called the 'pitcher plant,' on the stalk of which is a little cup-like formation which is always full of water. When it is very small it is full; as it grows larger it is still full; and when it reaches its maturity it is full. That illustrates holiness, All that God asks is that the heart should be cleansed from sin, and full of love, whether it be the tender heart of the little child, with feeble powers of loving, or of the full-grown man, or of the flaming archangel before the Throne. This is holiness, and this only. It is nothing less than this, and it can be nothing more.

Jesus, Thine all-victorious love Shed in my heart abroad: Then shall my feet no longer rove, Rooted and fixed in God.

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