



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

HOLINESS – IS IT WORTH THE COST?

By Joseph Gray

We began the last message with the lesson of the unfinished tower from Luke's Gospel. We pointed it up with the challenge of the unfinished hotel. Then we set forth the cost of holiness.

We come now to our second question, IS IT WORTH WHAT IT COSTS TO BE HOLY? Do the benefits outweigh the cost, or are the benefits so small that the price is not worth paying? Is the compensation we receive in return for the sacrifice we make sufficient to justify the sacrifice? In 2 Corinthians 1:15, Paul writes: "I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit." This is where John Wesley secured his favorite phrase for holiness, the "second blessing". The Revised Standard Version renders it a "double pleasure". Godbey calls it a "second grace".

Weymouth designates it as a "twofold joy". Moffatt's description is a "double delight". Lamsa translates it from the Aramaic as "grace doubly".

Take your choice. Certainly, whichever of these renderings you choose: here is an experience that has something to recommend it. Whether it be a benefit, a pleasure, a blessing, a grace, a joy, or a delight, or all combined, it is certainly something containing the riches of God's grace.

Look then with me at the benefits that holiness brings. Then having looked at those benefits you will be in position to make the final choice and answer the question, Is it worth what it costs to be holy?

The first benefit that it brings is:

I. A COMPLETE FREEDOM FROM THE SINFUL FALLEN NATURE

In John 1:29 we read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Dr. David Brown, that great Scotch Presbyterian divine, in commenting on this verse says: "The Lamb of God – the one God-ordained, God-gifted, sacrificial offering – that taketh away – taketh up and taketh out in its entirety, the word signifies both – the sin – the singular number being used to mark the collective burden and all-embracing efficacy." Then I think Dr. Brown's heart must have leaped for joy as he pulled his reading spectacles down on the tip of his nose and considered the full scope of God's redemptive power. Then pushing his glasses back into place and reaching for his pen again, that very prosaic writer penned the words: "There never was nor ever will be, a more glorious utterance than this." In I John 1:7 we read again, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Not sins – the actual transgressions – but sin, the root principle, the very nature of sin. Not forgives, but cleanses. Here then again is the complete deliverance God promises to His believing child.

In I John 2:1 the apostle declares, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

Dr. R. S. Candlish of the Free Church of Scotland says on this verse: "Let it be deliberately set before you as your fixed and settled purpose that you are not to sin, not merely that you are to sin as little as you can, but that you are not to sin at all. -- We are brought into a position in relation to God in which holiness is no longer a desperate negative strife, but a blessed positive achievement." Surely if God has provided such glorious freedom from the fallen nature of sin, it is worth paying any price to procure it. The testimony of multiplied thousands proclaims this glorious truth.

But not only does sanctification provide freedom from the fallen nature of sin; it provides:

II. WHOLENESS OF PERSONALITY – A COMPLETE INTEGRATION OF THE WHOLE MAN

I Thessalonians 5:23-24 tells us: “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” Weymouth says “entirely holy.” Godbey says “entirely unto perfection.” Luther renders it “through and through”. Then Paul goes on to say, “And ... your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.” Here is an integration of personality in the fullest sense. With all due regard to honest psychiatrists who render an honest service in ministering to sick minds, yet it is my personal conviction that a goodly percentage of those who seek for a solution of their personality problems by lying on a couch and pouring out their inmost thoughts to a man would find a quicker and more thorough integration of personality by kneeling at an altar of prayer and pouring out their hearts without reservation to God Himself, for their problems are largely spiritual rather than mental.

I have watched many a person struggling with a problem of personality: restless, dissatisfied, at enmity with all the world, hateful, even at variance with self, almost on the verge of suicide. I have seen such persons pour out their hearts in full and complete sublimation of human personality that brought them into the place of unity: unity of self in the fullest sense of the term, and unity with God himself.

In Hebrews 4:9-11 we read: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”

Here is the reason for much of the bliss and ecstasy of the saints of God. Since the soul is at rest, since the whole man is at peace with God, since every particle of the whole man is surrendered to Him, there is a wholeness and wholesomeness of personality more satisfying than any human psychology can provide. This can be yours if you will yield yourself to the will of God.

A third benefit of holiness is that:

III. IT PREPARES US FOR HEAVEN

Hebrews 12:14, declares, “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Immediately someone raises the questions: But what about the born-again believers who have not entered into the experience of holiness? Are they to be excluded from heaven, or will they find an entrance into heaven? If they make an entrance into the city of God, what becomes of the seemingly restrictive clause of this verse? Without falling head over heels into theological controversy, I believe the case may be stated briefly as follows.

1. All who enter into heaven must be cleansed from the nature of sin. There are no exceptions.
2. Infants who have not yet reached accountability will be cleansed in the hour of death by the universal provision of the atonement.
3. Christians who are walking in all the light they have, and have not yet been cleansed, will receive that grace in the dying hour.
4. Many who do not claim holiness of heart by that specific name yet have the experience in their hearts, and so are ready for heaven.
5. Those who know the way of holiness, and willfully draw back from God’s will for their lives, by that very act become rebellious against God and His law, and so forfeit their right to heaven, whatever their previous state may have been.

So then, the crux of the matter is this. Do you know that holiness is God’s will for you? If so, what have you done about it? If you have refused to accept it, then accept this solemn warning, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” And then put yourself in the next verse, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition” (Heb. 10:38-39).

You would not be happy in heaven with the fallen nature in your heart. It would make a hell out of heaven itself.

The story is told of two excursion boats lying side by side at a New York pier. One was chartered for a Sunday-school picnic, the other for a brewers' and bartenders' picnic. One man tarried too long by the way imbibing his own product, and stumbled at the last moment onto the wrong boat. As the boat steamed out into the river he looked for the bar, but found only soda pop and milk; he looked for a card game or a dice game, but found only children playing tag or other similar games; he looked for a group of cronies telling smutty stories and mouthing profanity, but found only saints of God testifying to His grace; he looked for a jazz band pouring out the discordant tempos of the underworld, and found only the songs of Zion. In desperation he rushed off to the captain and waved a sheaf of bills under his nose, crying,

“Let me off this boat. Take this money and put me on the other boat. I’m in hell here!” How true!

So then, the third benefit of holiness is that it fits the heart for heaven.

Again, another benefit of holiness is that:

IV. IT MAKES GOD’S WILL A DELIGHT TO OUR HEARTS

This is no contradiction of the fact that part of the price we must pay for holiness is a determination to do the will of God at all costs. Having settled it to go all the way with God, now that dogged determination to do His will turns into a glorious delight that we are enabled do His will.

It is recorded of Jesus in prophetic prospect by the Psalmist, and as a realized reality in the Book of Hebrews, “I delight to do thy will” (Ps. 40:8 and Heb. 10:7, 9). What is true of Jesus also becomes true of His saints. The delight in His will becomes their paramount desire. The question, “What will please my Beloved?” becomes their guiding star.

I have two nieces, now Christian workers. In their early teens they passed through a phase of rebellion against God and against their home. One even went so far as to pack her grip and try to run away from home. Recently, one of them said to me:

“Uncle Joe, you know, there was time when I thought Daddy was so hard on us. He asked so many things of us that seemed a heavy burden. His demands seemed so unreasonable. But I have come to the place where I see the sweet reasonableness of his commands. And even though I am now of age, and do not have to obey him, his slightest wish now has the weight of his former orders.” So with you, my friend, in your relationship to Christ. His will, will be your delight if you are wholly yielded to Him. Let me illustrate it in another way. There was a time when you went wooing.

Your greatest desire and most ardent wish was to satisfy the sweetheart who was the desire of your life.

If you are one of the fair sex, do you remember when he said that he thought that blue dress was so becoming, and just matched the color of your eyes? The next time he came around you wore blue again, that particular dress if you could possibly achieve it. Although Mother begged and pleaded until she was almost distracted, insisting that you had a yellow or pink dress that was much prettier, yet he had said he liked blue, and so you wore blue.

You baked a cherry pie. He said cherry pie was his favorite, and so you baked cherry pie every time he came around, until the cherry shelf in the pantry was nearly depleted and the cherries were almost sticking out of his ears and eyes. But what did you care? He had said that he liked cherries, and cherries he should have!

Now don’t look so smug, young man! Do you remember that day that she said she liked a certain brand of candy unusually well? You couldn’t find it in the town where she lived, so you drove clear to the county seat to get a box of it, and almost lost out on taking her to that very special occasion because it took so long to get back from your trip.

Do you remember when she said she dearly loved yellow roses? You liked them big and red, and red roses grew on every bush. But she had said yellow roses! So you traded off three hours of hard work to the only lady in your community that grew yellow roses. Your reward was an armful of lovely yellow roses to place in your beloved’s arms, and her smile of delight paid for all the hard labor.

What will please my beloved? That was the touchstone. And even though your hair now has a touch of silver at the temples, you still delight to remember your beloved's special tastes. You delight to do the will of that beloved one because of your overwhelming love. And so it is with the Great Lover of your soul. The tasks that once were so burdensome have now become so light. He is now your Beloved and you bask in the sunshine of His presence, content to do His will.

You can say with the poet, "His will I have joy in fulfilling." As with Madame Guyon, the prison cell is a delight because He is there. As with Brother Lawrence, the kitchen becomes radiant with His glory. With Fenelon you can pray:

"Lord, I know not what to ask of Thee. Thou only knowest what I need. Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. Father, give to Thy child that which he knows not how to ask. Smite or heal, deprive me or raise me up. I adore all Thy purposes without knowing them. I am silent; I offer myself up in a sacrifice; I yield myself to Thee; I will have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will."

And all of this is radiantly and gloriously real because His will is the supreme desire of your heart, the central core of your thinking, the flaming ardor of your will, the glorious conviction of your conscience. And thus with the Psalmist you can sing the song of your Redeemer and Sanctifier: "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

These, then, are the benefits of holiness, this double delight, this second benefit. Let me summarize again briefly:

A complete freedom from the fallen nature of sin; wholeness of personality – a complete integration of the whole man; an adequate preparation for heaven; a delightful embrace of the will of God.

Is it worth it? Will you pay the price? Surely by now you are convinced that the benefits outweigh the cost.

Will you just now embrace His will for you? Will you pay the price? Will you receive the reward? If so, you will be able to sing the words of Mrs. H. V. Miller's great song:

It's worth all it costs to be holy;
It's worth all it costs to be true;
God's blessing and honor shall crown thee
With power thy life to endue.

From Chapter 4: THE DOUBLE CURE And Other Holiness Sermons by Joseph Gray

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