



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

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I now began to see and feel my need of entire sanctification. I had perverted views of what constituted that state of grace, and of the way to seek it, but I resolved to set about seeking it as best I knew. I inquired of a number of persons who professed to know something of the experience, what I must do to obtain it. Their instructions did not help me in the least; and all I had done to this time furnished me with no evidence that I had made any appreciable advance toward it. My resolve now was to make a business of seeking it, and to be desperate in the effort. Long before this I had earnestly sought for it by fasting and prayer, and watchnights, until I was utterly exhausted by the effort. In all this I had failed to see the grand end to be secured, which is nothing more or less than perfect submission to, and harmony with, the will of God. I had yet to learn that the great preparation to receive it was to get the consent and choice of my will that God's will should be done, and whatever else I might do a deficiency in this would defeat my effort.

I had now fairly entered the gospel field. My long neglected and much dreaded duty I had now made my life work. I began with singleness of purpose to seek this precious pearl. Yet, fearful that one so utterly unworthy might be denied so great a boon, I longed to lay my heart open to some one who could instruct me; not knowing that this state can no more be comprehended before its attainment, than justification can be by an infidel. At last I heard that a good old gentleman who had enjoyed this blessing for more than forty years was coming to make his annual visit to his children with whom I was then boarding. In due time he came, and I took him to my room one day, closed the door, and with a sense of my own unworthiness, I asked him if God was willing that such an unworthy person as myself should possess so great a blessing as perfect love. The enemy was all this time suggesting to me that he probably would say, No! You are too young and presumptuous to think of that great and exalted state yet. But no, with deep and tender emotions the good old father answered, “Why, bless your dear heart; why, yes, the Lord wants you to be holy.” And I felt such gratitude towards the old man, because he thought God was willing to indulge me with the gift of so great a grace as I never can describe. From this I took fresh courage. I now asked him, “Can you tell me how I can get possession of it?” To this he replied, “By faith.” But he might as well have answered in Hebrew, for I understood not his meaning. I dreaded deception, and I could not suppose it possible that a state of grace that I had set so high an estimate upon could be secured short of a correspondingly valuable price or gift, instead of a single cheap and worthless act of believing. [So faith appeared to him then. -- Editor] If he had told me to do some great thing, or to be very faithful and expect to grow up into it by a long and tedious process I could have thought his instruction more rational. I remembered the soul-tearing process which I witnessed in a brother who was seeking the blessing at the camp meeting where I was converted, and I thought that must be the true way. I had serious doubts, however, about my constitution being able to endure the agony necessary to obtain the blessing.

While conversing with a person upon the subject one day, an elderly brother standing near, asked, “Why don't you go across the town to R____ street, where they have meetings every week at Dr. Palmer's? They can tell you how to find the blessing.”

Another elderly brother who stood by, and in whose piety I had great confidence, but who, though he

believed in that state of grace and had been seeking it for about twenty-six years without success, now said to me aside, "You must be very careful about having anything to do with Dr. Palmer's people, for they will tell you to believe that you already have the blessing, and besides many people do not think them so pious as they pretend to be after all their sanctimonious airs, uniform dress and great pretensions."

From that moment I so greatly feared them that I would have received instruction from them no sooner than from a Mahometan. Indeed, I think I would have avoided them at all hazard if about to meet them on the street. I now remembered hearing Dr. Fisk answer the questions of my mother, as to what and how she should believe, "Believe," said he, "that you have it and you have it." I did not then see the difference between "believing that you are receiving it, and that will bring it," and "believe that you have received it, and that will make it a fact that you have received it!" Both, alike, were utterly opposed to my reason; and I could have as easily endorsed Mahometanism as holiness secured by these irrational means. I now began to think I could see through the vagaries of these people; that their holiness consisted in giving up all concern about the matter, and then "by imagining that the end was gained, the cessation from the struggle would leave them quiet, and this quiet they called the witness of holiness.

Of course I had abandoned all hope of attaining the blessing in the way I had pursued so long and so unsuccessfully. And now I went to work with all determination, hoping if my body could endure the agony through which I elected to pass, I might by this desperation gain the land of Beulah. Hearing there was to be a camp meeting within the bounds of an adjoining conference, I determined to go, as a stranger, and thus avoid being seen by any of the brethren of the society where I belonged. I knew they had confidence in my piety, but I was afraid should they see me in great agony seeking the blessing of holiness, they might not know what to think of it; and possibly they might conclude that I had been committing some grievous sin; and not being able to explain all to their satisfaction, they would feel grieved, and I thereby would be the occasion of great injury to the cause of Christ.

When I reached the campground I found there a number of the brethren I desired to avoid. Well, thought I, it is my duty and privilege to be holy, to fit me for the great work I have to do; so I shall attend to that and leave God to take care of results. I was called upon to preach, but as I had come to seek the blessing of holiness, and to make that my business I declined. When I began in earnest to rein myself up to the work, the devil became in earnest also, and induced me to begin to inspect the external evidences of other people's piety. It seemed to me that I never saw the corrupt state of the church as I saw it then. One person's mode of dress was trim, and that to me was evidence of pride; another's was careless, and that indicated pride of his fancied humility. I felt grieved at these evidences of spiritual decline, and my tears flowed in abundance.

While walking in the grove alone, and grieving, thus, I met the good old man who had given me such comfort in saying he thought God was willing that I should have the blessing of holiness; and I began telling him how I had come to the meeting to seek it, but that such evidences of decline in the church made me feel so badly that I could not attend to it with any hope of success. The old gentleman saw this to be a trick of the devil to divert my attention and efforts from the great work and with a few words he set me right.

"I," said he, "was once troubled as you are now, and I got out of it by resolving, if everybody else goes to hell, by the grace of God I am going to heaven."

This broke the spell of what I then saw was one of the devil's pious frauds, to hinder me from gaining the precious prize I was after.

I now thought, if ever I gain the blessing, I must call my New York brethren into a tent to pray for me, and thus risk every evil coming through their possible misapprehensions of my moral state. This I did,

and when I had stated my object and purpose, I asked them to pray for me. I had an idea that they would pray for me with all their might, and possibly create a wave, so to speak, on which my little bark could come to land. They began to pray at random, for everybody, and for everything, without touching my case, just as people generally pray when they don't expect anything. I was now compelled to learn that no delegated power could reach my case, and I must go to God for myself. I then, while still on my knees, concluded to do my own praying and struggling; and supposing that the successful mode of prayer must be that which is characterized by great vehemence and will power, I watched my opportunity to break out in vociferous tones, and then I tried it; but I could not have uttered a loud word if it would have saved me, for my lips seemed to be sealed. This taught me the meaning of the words. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

I then turned to look into my heart to see what progress I was making, and was overwhelmed to find nothing but what caused loathing and abhorrence. It seemed to me that I had lost all my religion in trying to get more. The enemy now suggested, "You have lost all in trying to get holiness; you might better give up the struggle if such is to be the success of your effort," and believing this to be a fact I arose and left the tent to mourn over my last and greatest calamity. As I was passing along I met the good old man again, and while telling him what a disaster I had met with in trying to get holiness, I asked, "Don't you think I have done wrong in aspiring after such an exalted state of grace? I know I have lost all I had, for I certainly had the witness of the Spirit when I left New York, but now it is gone."

"Why, bless your dear heart," said this old man, "don't you know the Lord is just emptying you?" Then, in a few words he set me right again. I had supposed holiness to be given in installments, and when a succession of blessings combined had filled my heart about so full, I might call it holiness; first, the pardon of sins, then the joys of salvation, and then a succession of indefinite blessings, which in the aggregate would make up the sum total of holiness.

Now I learned that every blessing I ever had must be emptied out, for God would not fill a vessel with the wine of Canaan while it was half full of manna. I had now passed the days for relishing manna, and my Father had enough of the old corn and wine and this hereafter was to be my food. I had been seeking the last installment to complete the blessing.

I now asked him, "What shall I do?"

Said he, "You must believe for the blessing."

I went out into the grove alone, and while waiting upon the Lord and trying to believe, I thought I saw Jesus with my inner eye, just as I saw him at the time of my conversion. It was the appearance of Jesus as crucified. A voice seemed to say to me, "All you can do now is to believe in this crucified man, Jesus" (for the time his divinity was hidden from me). But the idea of trusting my soul's salvation on a dead man, roused all my old infidel notions, and I dared not risk it. That image appeared as distinctly as that of a person to my outward eye. He seemed to be in the twilight, and but a few rods distant from me. The camp meeting came to a close, and I went away without the great blessing.

So away I went to another camp meeting which was to be held the next week. There I again I stirred up myself to a desperate effort to seek for holiness, but with no appreciable advance! One day some one told me that the Palmers from New York were on the ground, and had a tent for the promotion of holiness. This family I feared more than the enemy of all righteousness; but as my success in seeking holiness was so poor I finally thought I would find that tent, and take a seat in some corner where if I saw they were pressing error upon the people I could quietly leave them. Strange as it may seem, an impression beset me that they might, without, or against my reason, or consent, fasten error upon me; so I resolved to be on the alert, and if I saw it coming to avoid it by flight. I reached the tent and took my seat as I had determined. I saw here a large number of persons, and among them some

Presbyterians, and some of other denominations. They were all sitting very composedly while one was reading from the Bible. I thought, "Can this be the way to seek holiness? I wonder that they don't get down and pray with all their might!" Still I could not complain of their reading the Bible, for that must be right. After the reading a lady arose whom I guessed to be the one from New York, whom I most feared, and I thought, I must now be on my guard; but the first words she uttered were, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service." "A living sacrifice," she said, "is a perpetual sacrifice." "Well," thought I, "that is Bible, and all right, so far." She then went on to state the preliminary steps to be taken: "First, a thorough consecration of ourselves to God." "Very well," said I to myself, all this I have done, over and over again." She then made this entire consecration to appear as a reasonable demand. She also showed the reasonableness of believing that God meant what he said, and that he would do what he said he would do, and that our faith must rest mainly on his promise. "He has said If I will do thus and so, he will meet me there and then, and faith consists in taking him at his word."

I then saw the way of faith as never before, and I said to myself, "I have tried everything else but faith; I will now go out and make an experiment." So I went out back of the encampment and stood reviewing my consecration to be certain that all was thoroughly devoted to God in an everlasting covenant. In a moment there appeared to me that image of Christ crucified; but I saw only his humanity. I seemed to be standing upon the edge of a fathomless gulf, and Christ stood upon the opposite side. The distance seemed too far for me to leap it, yet it was the thing for me to do. I must trust that crucified Christ to save me from ruin. It seemed to me that if I should make the effort and it prove a failure, I must from that moment bid adieu to all hopes of the world of blessedness, and abandon the profession of religion forever. I saw that everything I hoped, feared and desired was now, with all that I expected in the world to come, all, all to be staked on a single act, to be lost or won forever. I was intensely aroused by the thought of hazarding every hope of heaven like that, and I offered this prayer, "O Lord, thou knowest all hearts and that I want to do thy will. I have tried honestly to know all, and to do all I could to get right, and thou knowest that I stand ready to do or to suffer anything imposed upon me by which to secure the great blessing of perfect love. I have tried everything but this single and apparently inefficient and hopeless act of faith, which looks to my reason more like presumption than like an act that can do me good; and now, O God, seeing no other untried way, I will make the venture, and if it fails, on thee must rest the responsibility. If I am lost for believing in Christ, I cannot help it."

I seemed now to open converse with the Holy Ghost, and asked, "How shall I believe? With my head or with my heart?"

"The answer came, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

I now made the leap, as distinctly as if it had been in body, and in the same moment found myself in the arms of Jesus, who held me safely. I felt that I could risk a world in his hands; for I saw that "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Oh, how changed did all things seem in that glorious moment! "Surely," said I, "this must be heaven, or like it, for it comes up to my highest ideal of that place."

The next moment the enemy suggested, "This is not the blessing of holiness, for you did not lose your strength, nor have you shouted, or made any great ado about it; but on the other hand you do not want to speak aloud." And it did seem as though a single loud word would mar the rich spell which held me captive.

I then took my eye of faith off from the Saviour, to examine this temptation, and in a moment I was

back on the other side of the gulf again, and was as empty as ever. “Well,” said I, to myself, “I felt all right while believing.” That emboldened me to try again, and with greater daring than before, and with the same happy result.

Now the temptation, “You cannot keep it,” took my eye off again, and again I was back on the other side of the gulf. I then sprang off again, when the tempter said, “No one will believe you,” and again succeeded in robbing me of my witness.

And so did I alternate between faith and doubt joy and sorrow, until I learned this fact, that it is not for believing, but while believing that the work is done. I hang upon the atonement, and realize the response of the Holy Spirit assuring me that the work is done. So I now determined to make the leap again, and to keep my eye on Christ. This I did; but the enemy asked, “How will it be tomorrow?”

I answered, “I don’t know, for tomorrow has not yet come.”

“Well, how will it be in five minutes?”

I answered, “I don’t know nor will I concern myself about it; I believe I am saved now.” I saw the philosophy of faith. I breathe but one breath of air at a time; that is all I need; when I want another it will be allowed. So I do not need a stock of the joys of salvation for future use, but take it, breathe it, by acts of faith just as I have need. Continuously acting faith brings a continuous supply. Faith to the soul is what breathing is to the body.

Now, too, I learned the philosophy of consecration. It is to make room by emptying out the heart.

“Now,” said the Holy Spirit, “go and tell brother M-- what the Lord has done for you.”

I went onto the campground and when I found him, I began: “Brother M____, I believe ...”

“If you tell him,” said the tempter, “he’ll tell you to be very careful about making great professions, for sanctification is a very great blessing.”

Brother M____ stood gazing at me without saying a word.

Then I began again, “Brother M____, I believe, ...” but fearing he would think I was boasting, I began to qualify my statement, but did not speak, and finally broke out, “If don’t keep it five minutes, believe that Jesus has sanctified my unworthy heart. Glory to God!”

Said Brother M____, “Go and tell my wife.”

I had now gathered strength by the testimony I had given, and the confidence Brother M____ seemed to express; and away I went to his wife and said to her, “Sister M____, Jesus has given me the great blessing.”

She rejoiced and said, “Now go up on the stand and profess it to all the people.”

I did so, and it seemed to settle and establish me.

From this I learned to confess the exact thing done for me and to guard against even hesitation in professing the thing as it is.

Dr. Palmer found me, and said “Mr. Wesley says that one sanctification is equal to ten conversions, as it will result in that.”

I took a cue for my future labors from this, and resolved to make a test of it now. I went into a tent and began at once to invite my brethren to come now to the cleansing blood. We started a meeting, and God began at once to work in awful power. I have always found that making the experience of holiness the principal feature in revival meetings does not hinder the work of conversions. Here one or two penitents came in unasked and one said, “I was impressed to come to this very tent.” In a few minutes

they were converted. The work in this manner increased until the end of the camp meeting.

Now I began to learn a distinction between the joys of sanctification and those of justification. Formerly, if a camp meeting had been a good one, I would feel sad to leave the hallowed spot. The striking of the tents was to me like a funeral. Now I found it a matter of joy, for I carried a camp meeting with me. In holiness I found all the elements of a good meeting.

When I reached my room in the city, the thought came, "You will sleep off all this as you have other blessings." I retired to rest, and the last words from my lips were, "Glory to God!" When I awoke in the morning, it was "Glory to God" still. Thus I found the old corn and wine of the Canaan of perfect love was unlike the manna of justification, it was hearty, solid and abiding.

Sabbath came and I found no more shrinking from doing duty. I went over to the church, and in offering the closing prayer I had special liberty, and was sweetly blessed.

On passing down the aisle a good brother met me and said, "Do you know how you prayed? Why you prayed directly to Christ, and you did not even mention the name of God, but seemed to pray as if you could get anything you asked of Jesus."

"Well, brother, it did seem to me that 'in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' And don't you know that Jesus said once, 'Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask and receive that your joy may be full.'"

I now felt the power of the words, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," as never before. It seemed no risk to hang a world's salvation on the merits of Christ. In this light I saw the sin of unbelief to be the great soul-destroying sin of the world, and in comparison with it murder, robbery, and other sins were of small account.

Source: "Life of John W. Redfield," by Joseph Goodwin Terrill

[the Enter His Rest website](#)