

# THE SPLENDOUR OF HOLINESS

by  
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*Bow down to the Lord  
in the splendour of holiness,  
and dance to His honour  
all men on earth.*

I CHRONICLES 16:29 (NEB)

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## ***FOREWORD***

Holiness is a theme which has avowedly exercised those who would become saints in this world. Its pursuit is not confined to Christianity, but is found in Islam' Buddhism' Hinduism' and in fact' most—if not all—religions. It is not missing from Israel of the Old Testament' nor from Israel of today. However' we must take care how we understand the word. We tend to read back into ancient Judaism the saintly pietism of our Christian centuries' but the down-to-earth holiness of Israel is no parallel to our pious endeavours. Similarly' in Islam the concept of holiness differs from' say, that of the apostolic age. In fact, every belief system has its own unique definition for it. The desire and seeking for holiness is universal, whether in religions or out of them.

The Christian will have the same basic drive for holiness which is common to all men.

Because man has the drive to be holy, he spends much of his life trying to assure himself—and others—that that is just what he is: 'Tolerably holy,' he might say. Unholiness brings shame, and part of the thesis of this book is that man was created for holiness and will not be at peace until his life is pure. Jesus said that the pure in heart will see God, and without seeing God, man is never fulfilled, never completely what God made him to be.

In this book I have tried to lay out the materials which relate to the holiness which man may receive as a gift of God. Those who wish to see this endeavour in precis form should turn to Appendix Two, 'PERSPECTIVE ON HOLINESS.' In fact it may be profitable for all readers to read this proposition as a guide to the entire book.

I am aware that separate treatments of various aspects of

holiness may tend to be confusing. This is partly due to the nature of the subject itself, which is so wide in its scope, and related to so many elements which face the sincere believer. The reader should find plenty of material for contemplation.

There is more to my purpose than that, however.

Recently a woman said to a preacher friend of mine, 'You have certainly given us much to think about.' He pounced on her. 'I wasn't trying to give you anything to think about,' he said. 'I was hoping to give you something to act upon. Thinking lets you out of acting.'

How right he was. I trust that when the materials contained in this volume are thought about, they may provide a way into action, the simple action of living a holy life. The pain we feel when we seem to fail so much, to sin so often, and to succeed so rarely, may itself be the proof that we are holy people. If we feel pain then it means we are sensitive to the need to be holy, for:

*Those who fain would serve You best,  
Are conscious most of wrong within.*

I cannot claim to have completed my own pilgrimage of holiness, but I have learned so much along the way. Ultimately I may see that 'much' to be so little, but I offer it to you for what it is worth. Nothing in the endeavour of holy living is really ever lost. If this sounds like cliché, so be it, but it is nevertheless true.

Geoffrey Bingham  
Coromandel East, 1984

## CHAPTER ONE

***MAN'S QUEST FOR HOLINESS*****THE DEMAND FOR HOLINESS**

Is it really true that man has an inner demand for holiness? If he has, is it innate and universal? How would holiness figure today for modern man? Is it not furthest from his thought? Has not our advanced knowledge and technology rid us of the need of the 'God of the gap'? Is not the idea of holiness absurd, since it is wholly irrelevant to contemporary living? These are questions which call for answers.

The old demand of the God of Israel—Yahweh—was, 'You be holy for I am holy,' and 'You be holy as I am holy.' This same demand was made of the early Christians. We moderns may feel that we have outgrown it, as the demand of a God imagined by Jews and Christians alike. Whether this be true or not, human beings in large numbers and from many cultures are still searching for holiness, both in their gods' and in themselves. This is simply a fact of modern history.

Anyone who has watched Moslems at prayer will see their serious attention to washings of the extremities of their bodies, and the rapt devotion which many show when they commence their prayers. To watch a Hindu in the early morning apply his mind and heart to Ram is no small thing. Likewise a devoted Jew at his prayers is quite impressive. No less the Christian at his. All these wish their God to be

pure and holy, high and lifted up, strong and commanding. None of this, of course, proves that there is any Jewish Yahweh, Islamic Allah, Hindu Ram or Christian Lord. Indeed the only thing this worship proves is that man has a faculty for worship and a drive for adoration.

If we have seen the adoration of a man for his woman, a parent for its child, a purchaser for his new purchase, then we know that the same principle of worship is present and operative. Man needs an object of worship, and needs it to be good, clean, and in line with his own ideals. Of course there is another kind of worship, a decadent worship we may call it. It is fiercely—almost lustfully—in love with what is wrong, impure and evil. Yet the same adoration is there, the same submission to the god or idol. The worshipper believes he will fulfil his emotional demands in immorality and deviations from society's norms. He is as busy about his worship, and, from his deity, makes demands of unholiness comparable with the demands of purity which the ethical worshipper makes of his god.

If we think the brief summary I have given is not rooted in fact, then we are greatly in error. Rightly understood, man is as much a worshipping creature as ever. His exercise of adoration and idolatry is as serious as ever. He may have more lords, gods and idols to worship than hitherto, but he is no less busy about seeking his own kind of holiness than were his ancestors.

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HOLINESS?

A study of animism and its practices shows us that taboos are immensely powerful. They are in some form in every society and culture. To break one of these taboos is to risk some kind of judgement. It is to interfere with the structure of the culture. Taboo is connected with the pursuit of holi-

ness, and each implies that there is some deity, spirit or power which directs the lives of human beings.

Holiness is transcendence: it is the presence of a power other than man, and that power is significant. We may dismiss this as nonsense and superstition, but often the very people who are scornful and cynical of this higher power themselves form rituals of life, believe in luck, or give superstitious credit to the signs of the Zodiac. Man is out to gain knowledge of the events which will happen, somehow believing that his fate or destiny is invested in the future. In his own way, he thus has a sense of the greater, the more powerful, the numinous, and thus also of holiness which is extrinsic to himself. His sensing may, of course, be nothing more than a subjective feeling which is in all human beings. Even so, this feeling is a matter of interest, and—it may prove—of significance to the human race. Whatever the case, the sense or feeling is no proof of the objective being of God or any other deity. It simply shows that man looks beyond himself for worship.

Holiness in the life of Judaism was understood to be the transcendence of the God they worshipped. He was Creator: He was higher than man. His reign, rule, control and plan were beyond the grasp of man. Being sovereign, He would work out His purposes as He wished. That He chose Israel to be His people was wholly a matter of His love and grace. He demanded the response of holy worship and consistent ethical living.

The God of the Christians was the same God. The difference in Christian thinking was that Yahweh had always had a Son, and that this Son had become man, to reveal the true nature of God, and to work out God's plan of love and grace to redeem man who was beset by sin and its terrible outcome. The Son was to bring a solution to man for his ever-clinging, ever-besetting guilt and shame. Whilst something of this release was to be found in Judaism, it

lacked a definitive and final action of liberation. The fact that Christians have an affinity with worshippers of the old regime of Israel is reasonable proof that they have similar ideas of the holiness of God.

### HOLINESS FOR EVERY HUMAN

We have seen man's drive for holiness, or, perversely, for radical unholiness. However we may interpret this principle' we must conclude that the drive for something beyond ourselves' and the need for worship' is endemic in humanity. That its objects and modes of worship vary from culture to culture and even person to person is self-evident; but the subjectivity of man proves nothing about the objectivity (or otherwise) of the things and spirits he worships. It does show, however, that our modernity has made little difference to our drive for worship. There are those who think that the barrenness of emotional life, which rationalism and scientism bring in our modern age' has driven society deeply into religiosity, superstition and the occult. Certainly these trends show a certain hunger in man for what is beyond himself' and what may—in many cases—be called the drive for the supernatural.

### CHAPTER TWO

## *MAN'S SEARCH FOR DIGNITY*

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One of the great themes of the Bible is the giving of dignity to God, man, and nature. Children are to honour their parents. The poor must be given dignity, for 'he who oppresses the poor insults his Maker.' Jewish laws made provision for strangers, for the maimed and handicapped, for the poor and the oppressed. Animals were given dignity. Likewise the Christians were to 'honour all men,' to honour wives, to give dignity to children, to accept civil authorities, and be willing to give help to the poor, the sick, to prisoners and refugees. In love they were to lay down their lives for others. Certainly in life they were to consider others before themselves and to be servants to all. All this, summed up, meant they cared for human dignity.

This is the message behind the theme of holiness. When man gives honour to his God, he also gives honour to himself. In an age which is bedevilled with 'poor self-image' and 'low self-esteem,' social workers are struggling to give man a sense of his dignity. Often one person's dignity is achieved at the expense of the dignity of many others. Social esteem is given to those who have money and education, the blessings of which have often been achieved by means which have actually put down many others in society. Envy, jealousy and cruel struggle for supremacy have been generated in the striving for dignity, and they have altered the true balance of society. This is an old story, and well-worn.

Man, then, needs something which will give him genuine dignity. Self-worship is not necessarily true self-esteem. It may be self-idolatry, something which is a delusion. The self-worshipper—sooner or later—is in for a cruel disillusionment. The dignity he appears to have achieved is indeed a fragile one. It is fragile because man's worship has been confined to himself. His service is self-service. It is, in fact, selfish. Israel's singers often took up the theme of the seeming success of the evil, the rapacious and the wicked. They could find no solution to the wrong prosperity of evil man until they went to worship God. In His presence they understood, but only because they looked beyond the present, to the time of God's unfailing judgements.

### DIGNITY LIES IN THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP

The Jews had a saying that 'they who worship idols become like them.' Whether man fashions his idols from his own mind—i.e. images of the mind—or fixes up the images of others, does not greatly matter. The worshipper can never rise higher than his god or idol. If that idol has no 'height' or innate reality, then neither can the worshipper have real height or reality. Man's dignity lies in the dignity of his object of worship. This is really so when he pursues the cements innate in his god. Paul speaks somewhere of 'liars and slow bellies,' and in another place of those 'whose god is their belly.' Not very flattering, but most revealing!

The Jews spoke of 'the Most High God,' meaning that other gods (whether real or imagined) were far inferior to Yahweh their God. They called Him 'the true God' as against the untrue or false gods. Yahweh said, 'To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?' (Isa. 40:25).

God, for the Jews, was incomparable, and Jewish dignity lay in the loftiness of God. One of their prophets spoke

from God:

For thus say' the high and lofty One  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
'I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.'

Only with such a high God could the spirit of man be high, especially when it knew an affinity with its Creator, and a likeness to its Maker. Only then could 'deep call unto deep,' and 'like unto like.' Man's dignity must depend on the exalted nature of his God.

### GOD DIGNIFIES MAN

In our modern humanistic society a great deal is made of the needs of man. On the one hand he is said to have natural brilliance and ability. He has no need of any God: he can manage without any deity. On the other hand man is said to be a creature of needs. These needs—it is said—are emotional, physical and social. Man's needs, then, are to be met in and by society.

Whilst much of this may be true, little is said of what is required of man. When the God of Israel and of the Christian church said, 'You be holy for I am holy,' the requirement was what raised man's dignity. The Jewish and Christian traditions agree that man was made in the image of God, and therefore should reflect God by his actions. They also recognise that man rebelled against God, and in some sense cut his links with God. Man wishes to 'go it alone.' He desires to create his own laws and principles for himself. This self-dependence is doomed to fail: man keeps accommodating to his own feelings and wishes. It is God's goodness that He does not destroy man but keeps at him.

He keeps saying 'You be holy for I am holy,' and He says this whether a person is a Jew, Christian, pagan or atheist. In spite of his scorn of God, man is still God-obsessed. He still is subject to that inner drive for holiness.

We began this section by saying that man sees himself as a creature of needs' and seeks to fulfil these needs. Yet unless he sees himself as a person of whom God requires (ie. demands) holiness, he will never achieve genuine dignity. Simply to fulfil one's own needs is a selfish task, and self-demeaning. It is as though God is saying 'Leave your mean pursuits' come from your mediocre and mundane endeavours; drop your pointless existence and come to your true self. Pursue holiness. Hunger and thirst after righteousness. Fulfil your true destiny. Come and be truly humans'

It is this alone which dignifies man' and the pursuit of something beyond himself is the history of humanity. The drive for inner purity and outward integrity is deep in man' in the most sinful of all humans. It is about this that we enquire in this book' and it is about this that we wish to speak.

CHAPTER THREE

***THE GOD WHO COMMANDS AND BLESSES***

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The Judaic-Christian God—to say nothing of the Allah of Islam—is a no-nonsense God. His creation of man was a remarkable matter. He said, 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness.' This startling decision means that man reflects God in every element of His being although he, man, is not God in any sense whatever. The 'manness' of man is dependent upon the 'Godness' of God. The prophet Jeremiah said, 'The way of a man is not in himself. It is not in a man who walks to direct his own footsteps' (Jer. 10:23). The psalmist of Israel put it in another way. He said, 'All my springs are in you' (Psa. 87:7). Man is dependent upon God; he always needs fellowship with God, and indeed God requires this of him. That is the essence of worship.

Man was given dignity when God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' We may say from this that man was given dignity through vocation, and a very high vocation it was (see Gen. 1:26-28). It was implicit in this command that man serve God by his vocation and worship Him as Creator. In other words, man was to give dignity to God and man' and also to all creatures.

The Biblical history of man is the account of his refusing to live in accord with the principles of his creation and vocation. It is the history of a 'fall' from full relationship with God and a consequent self-managing and self-motivated life on the earth. It involves man's greed, cruelty, deceit' evil, and his endeavour to live without God and to establish himself as the independent ruler of his world. Unfortunately for him there are other powers created by God, which, like man, and even prior to him, rebelled against God. The Bible describes them as celestial, ie. supernatural. In some way they allied themselves with rebellious man, and even—it can be said—took him over. Thus the history of man is explainable in the light of his self-extending and self-preserving pursuits' actions which have necessarily set man against man' culture against culture and nation against nation, so that such a race cannot be described as holy.

It is into this world that God speaks unceasingly, 'You be holy, for I am holy.' Why does He say that, and what good can it achieve? Man seems even not to hear God. Is it not then futile?

### A TASTE FOR THE OTHER

No, it is not futile, for I am sure that every human being has what may be called 'a taste for the other,' ie. that no human being is ultimately satisfied without holiness, not even those who profess contempt for it. If I did not believe this I would not write a book about it.

I am equally sure that if the reader can see sense in pursuing holiness then he may well attempt it. That is why I want to share something of the joys of holiness if a person will go that way, and the terrors of not being holy if a man refuses to go that way. In all this, there is nothing of bribes or threats, but only of promises and judgements.

### THE TASTE FOR HOLINESS

One of Jesus' famous sayings is, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Seeing God would have little appeal to a person who thinks he does not believe in God. It would have considerably less appeal to a person who has decided he wishes to go his own way without God. Even less would a person who is steeped in evil find the thought of seeing God very attractive to him. Yet I believe, deep down in every human being, there is some wistfulness, something very much akin to nostalgia, which makes him want to see God. Mind you, such an experience could be quite frightening, especially if we thought it would reveal our own evil.

What does Jesus mean by 'blessed'? This rather quaint word is much used in the Bible. It really means 'a state of happiness' joy and serenity, in which the person who is blessed is emotionally fulfilled, personally enriched, and wholly free of guilt and shame.' Quite a description: quite a state! Who would not want such a state? Note also that Jesus did not say that this person will be biased one day, ie. when he sees God, but that it is *now* that he is blessed.

In what way does purity of heart bring a human being into present blessing? The following answers occur to me:

#### 1. To be Pure is a Fine State of Being

Unless perverse, no human being likes constantly to be physically filthy. Even the holy man of India who thinks it is holy never to wash, believes this is because he is denying himself a certain pleasure, not that it is unholy to wash ! The baptism and lustration of religions and psychological (compulsive) rituals all promise some kind of pleasing purification. It is just good to be clean! If somehow we could be pure and be sure that purity would continue, then life would be quite pleasant. Sheer purity of body, mind, heart and

thought seems to be a desirable' even though impossible, state.

## 2. The Pure Shall See God

The impure would have some kind of dread if they knew they would eventually see Him. This would be natural. Light unmask darkness and exposes its nature. It would be good—if only for this reason—to be pure. Even so it would be a miracle, for many folk think they are pure when they are not. By human standards they may approximate to (human) purity; by God's standards the case would be otherwise, and radically so. Isaiah speaks of those 'who call light darkness and darkness light' (5:20) and Jesus' of those whose consciences are so diseased that they think what is darkness in them is really light! (Matt. 23:25-28). Later we will see how deceitful the human heart can be.

## 3. To See God is the Highest and Richest Experience a Person Can Have

John says, 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.' It would be wonderful to *be* light ourselves and so *see* Light. Only the pure in heart are in such a state. Paul teaches us that God 'alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.' He adds, 'whom no man has ever seen or can see' (I Tim. 6:16). In saying no man can see God, he is quoting God's statement to Moses (Exod. 33:20), 'you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.' That we should one day see God, then, is the highest privilege given to man. From our present point of view its value is that seeing Him we shall be fully human, and not—as now—in a state of deficiency and unfulfilment. To anticipate this makes us blessed: to consummate this will be beyond man's greatest dreams.

## 4. 'To the Pure All Things are Pure'

This statement of Paul (Titus 1:15) is quite amazing. He adds to it, ' . . .but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted.' Elsewhere Paul says, 'love . . . thinketh no evil,' meaning that the pure in heart always see the true good. They are never mean or suspicious. Corrupt persons have 'the evil eye,' ie. they see evil in everything and misinterpret the good. We need not go into this device of seeing others as guilty and ourselves as guiltless: it is so patently wrong.

To have a heart which can live in the midst of the evil of the world and not be affected by it, and retain hope and joy and a clean approach to all things, is one of the richest values of holiness. As David once said, 'with the pure thou shalt show thyself pure; and with the crooked thou shalt show thyself perverse' (Psa. 18:26).

## 5. Purity Brings Light and Understanding

Perhaps we are only saying in another way what is contained in our point (4.) above. Darkness blinds us to light, as light to darkness. To see God means to understand Him, anyway as far as a human can have understanding. We can only perceive the nature of God when we are in light. The promise is that 'when he appears we shall be like him' for we shall see him as he is' (I John 3:1-3). The need for purity then is indispensable. To penetrate into the nature of God must be that for which man was created.

## THE TASTE THAT MAKES US RESPOND

What we have said about the advantages and privileges of purity ought to draw a response from us. The promises that

accompany purity of heart open a vast and rich vista of human living, for those who will see it. Countless numbers have, but many have not. For them is the alternative of judgement. Judgement is not a threat but a warning, and the warning needs to be heeded. Judgement outlines the richness of blessing. No person needs to come under judgement when God is the God of love and grace. Only when love and grace are rejected must judgement come.

CHAPTER FOUR

***THE GOD WHO COMMANDS AND CURSES***

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In our previous chapter we spoke of ‘a taste for the other,’ ie. for what God has for man. The ‘other’ is God Himself, and His purposes in creating the world. It includes the destiny He has planned for man, and for all His creation. It is all good, for ‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ (Gen. 18:25). The answer must be, ‘Yes!’ What then of those who oppose God? The answer is, ‘They must receive judgement.’

The obverse of ‘Blessed are the pure in heart’ must be ‘Cursed are the impure in heart for they shall never see God.’ The prospect is terrifying, rightly understood. For the impure, the five points of blessing in the last chapter are reversed and become forms of cursing. They would read something like this:

- impurity is a sad state of being;
- the impure shall never see God;
- the impure will see darkness, not God;
- nothing will be pure to them;
- they shall live in darkness and misunderstanding.

In other words, they will deny their essential selves, the selves God created for holiness of life and worship. We ought not to delude ourselves that God’s commands are not

final, and that His judgements can somehow be evaded. In respect to His holiness, God is unchangeable.

### PURITY AT THE END-TIME

If warnings are helpful then we ought to give them and receive them. Sometimes a warning sends fear into us, and this is the kind of fear which one old writer said 'is the beginning of wisdom.' It is enough for us in this short account to see that the consummation of history is a very beautiful thing. It is a wedding, called 'the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb.' In the Old Testament, Israel was often shown as the Bride of God. In the New Testament, the church—again, the people of God—is represented as the Bride of Christ, who himself is the Son of God.

In the Book of the Revelation, the Bride is also shown under another figure, namely the 'Holy City.' This city is pure, the place and source of holiness for the human race. It is 'adorned as a bride for her husband.' It is 'clothed with fine linen, pure and white.' The opposite to the Bride is the Harlot, decked out in gaudy clothes and very showy. It may well be called 'the unholy city.' Anyway, this city—called Babylon—is destroyed by a sudden judgement of God. The end is drawing near and soon the one thing which matters will be the Bride, the Holy City.

It is so holy that 'nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life,' ie. those whom God has made holy. At the time of the end there will be no opportunity to change life-styles, for judgement is imminent. Hence the angel who is explaining all things to John (the writer of the book), say", 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.' It is now too late to change.

Some statements are so strong that our modern queasy spirits quail at them. One of these is Revelation 21:8:

*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.*

What the lake of fire is, is not easy for us to understand, but the picture of it makes us flinch. Whilst this fire may not be simply physical it is nevertheless actual and real.

### CONCLUSION REGARDING JUDGEMENTS

As we proceed through our book we will see that God's holiness is not merely passive and static. God may be impeccable, ie. flawless and without evil, but it is not only that. God's holiness is dynamic. It sets out not only to oppose evil but to stamp it out. God's holiness must ultimately destroy everything that is impure in His universe. Peter the apostle speaks of the 'day of the Lord' (ie. of judgement) coming like a thief in the night. He adds, 'and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.' He continues, 'Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness' (II Pet. 3:10-11).

No reader of those words should simply see them as a threat, but as an honest and helpful warning. Promises and warnings are both necessary to get us moving in the matter of holiness.

## CHAPTER FIVE

***THE NATURE OF HOLINESS***

We now need to take the biggest step of all, which is to try to understand the holiness of God. If we remember we cannot explore man's holiness until first we know God's holiness, then that will perhaps motivate us to make our enquiry. At the same time we must remember to be reverent in our enquiry, for -'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

We need of course to understand the meaning of the word *holiness*.

**UNDERSTANDING HOLINESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

As we begin to examine the word 'holiness,' we need to be aware of the limitations and possibilities of such a study. Words are not merely understood through studying the words themselves, although that is helpful. They need to be seen in their contexts to obtain the richest meaning. They need to be seen in use as they describe incidents, people, and God. They need to be seen as symbols only; the object or quality or idea which they represent is the important thing. So there are occasions when a word may not even be used, yet it covers the situation. For example, when Jacob had an encounter with God at a place he called 'Bethel' (*Bethel* means 'the house of God'), Jacob was awed and said, 'How

awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' This is a situation where the word 'holy' would fit so well, even though it is not used.

We can often understand a word without the aid of a dictionary, and the terms 'holy,' 'holiness,' 'purity,' and even 'consecration' and 'sanctification,' are fairly well known. Even so, a minimal word study in our case will not go astray. In the Old Testament, the root word is *qodosh* (Hebrew). Its origins are debated by scholars, but general agreement is that its basic idea is to cut or separate. Some see separation as elevation, and some as 'otherness,' eg. God is 'other' than man, and that constitutes His holiness.

The word 'holy' in regard to God is not meant to be simply a quality or attribute which He possesses, but rather to point to His divine greatness, His loftiness, His awesome majesty, and to His unapproachableness, ie. 'he [who] dwells in light unapproachable.'

If God is holy, then His people must be holy, and certain things pertaining to Him and His worship must be seen to be holy. We will deal with these later, since we are seeking, at this stage, to understand the word generally and not in all of its uses. Even so a few illustrations of holiness will be helpful. When Moses was in the desert and saw a bush burning without being consumed, he was curious and wandered across to observe it. He heard a voice saying, 'Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' God then declares Himself, and we are told that 'Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God' (Exod. 3:1-6).

Moses was not seeing God, but what is called a 'theophany,' ie. a manifestation of God. We might call it 'an insulated appearance of God.' In most cases such manifestations are called 'the angel of the Lord,' for some angelic power could be the agent for God in His appearance. Some

times this is called 'theophanic glory. Whatever the name given it means that the appearance of God is a holy appearance. This may help us to understand the word.

Again in I Samuel 6:19 to 7:11 there is an account of the return of the ark of the covenant, by the Philistines who had captured it. On this occasion some of the men of Bethshemesh—men who were Israelites—looked into the ark and they were slain by the Lord. This terrified the people of Bethshemesh who said, 'Who is able to stand before the Lord this holy God?' In one sense, then, God's holiness is grim at least from a human point of view. This is further shown in the use of the word *haram* (Hebrew), ie. holy' or devoted.' It means something which belongs to God. In fact, all things belong to God, but in this case 'devoted' has a special meaning, for in Leviticus 27:28-29 it is said:

But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the Lord, of anything that he has, whether of man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord. No one devoted, who is to be utterly destroyed from among men, shall be ransomed; he shall be put to death.

These are very strong words, and need pondering. So too does the incident at the capture of Jericho when all spoils were 'devoted to the Lord,' but Achan committed the sin of taking that which was *haram*. For this he was destroyed, and because his family were considered as one with him, they also were destroyed (see Josh. 6:18-19,7:10-26).

#### THE PUZZLE OF GOD'S HOLINESS

For centuries—perhaps all through man's history—human beings have complained about God. His holiness is puzzling to them. Doubtless it is because of the principle we saw in Psalm 18:26 'with the pure thou shalt show thyself pure;

and with the crooked thou shalt show thyself perverse.' Man, of himself, cannot understand God's holiness. The incidents with the people of Bethshemesh and with Achan at Jericho make God's judgements seem harsh and even cruel to us. Yet it is only because man has not penetrated to the core of God's holiness that it appears thus.

An example of God's jealousy for His holiness is seen in Numbers 20:2-13. Moses faced an angry and rebellious congregation. The people were thirsty and God told Moses to assemble the people at the rock where once before Moses had smitten the rock under God's command and it had poured forth water (Exod. 17:2-7). God told Moses not to smite the rock this time, but simply to speak to it. We suppose this was to show God's graciousness, but Moses became angry, chastised his people with harsh words, and smote the rock instead of simply speaking to it. He hit it twice, and God's holiness was profaned: 'you did not believe in me, *to sanctify me* in the eyes of the people of Israel.' For this Moses was forbidden to go into the promised land. The writer of the story concludes: 'These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel contended with the Lord, and *he showed himself holy among them.*'

We conclude that God's holiness is beyond man's general moral reasoning and perception. Somehow man must submit his reasoning in humility to God so that he may discover the true nature of holiness, and in particular the holiness of God.

## CHAPTER SIX

***THE NATURE OF GOD'S HOLINESS (1)***

Because man—left to his own reasoning—can never discover the nature of God's holiness, he must be faced with the word of God. He must be confronted by that which allows no human reasoning to dilute or adulterate it. The word of God in its prophetic nature and content is indeed dynamic. God is as good as His word: indeed He is as His word. He is one with His own utterance. It declares Him. Hence the prophetic preambles of 'Thus says the Lord,' 'As the Lord liveth,' and 'Hear the word of the Lord.' Without attempting much to draw theology from the relevant prophetic utterances, let us read them in various blocks of quotations. Put together as we have collected them below, they make quite astonishing and moving reading.

**GOD'S ACTIVE HOLINESS**

Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders? (Exod. 15:11).

There is none holy like the Lord, there is none besides thee; there is no rock like our God (I Sam. 2:2).

Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us? (I Sam. 6:20).

Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and his power is in the skies. Terrible is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel, he

gives power and strength to his people (Psa. 68:34-35).

The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he! (Psa. 99:2-3).

The Lord God has sworn by his holiness (Amos 4:2).

The Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the holy God shows himself holy in righteousness (Isa. 5:16).

They will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel (Isa. 29:23).

These quotes could be extended, they are so numerous, but we must now look at related elements of God's holiness.

God's holiness is also His glory, His person, known in the elements of fire which relate to light, splendour, judgement, purification and empowering energy. Holiness and glory are really the one, and often the terms *qadosh* (holiness) and *kabod* (glory) are used synonymously. For example, in Isaiah 6 where the prophet has a vision of the holiness of God, the seraphim cry, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' Both that holiness and glory come together when the seraphim takes a burning coal from off the altar of sacrifice and touching the prophet's lips assures him, 'your guilt is passing away and your sin is atoned for.' The sacrificial fire purges the prophet of his impurity: God's holiness is vindicated and His glory shown to be dynamic. We can now explore the prophetic communications of God's nature as glory, and as purifying fire.

**GLORY AS THE FIRE OF HOLINESS**

And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round

about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about (Ezek 1:27-28).

In Deuteronomy 9:3, Moses tells the Israelites that God will destroy the Anakim before them, for 'as a devouring fire is the Lord your God.'

Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth, glowing coals flamed forth from him . . . the foundations of the world were laid bare, at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils (Psa. 18:8, 15).

Fire, smoke, brimstone, flames and ashes are all words used in conjunction with God's judgemental holiness and glory. In Isaiah 4:2-4, the prophet speaks of the day when 'the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgement and by a spirit of burning.' Doubtless this is the Holy Spirit, and John the Baptist refers to Christ baptising the true people of Israel 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire. . . but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire' (Matt. 3:11-12, cf. Acts 2:1-4). He, Jesus, also has come to bring fire on the earth (Luke 12:49-50), and some see that he himself knows a baptism of fire.

CHAPTER SEVEN

***THE NATURE OF GOD'S HOLINESS (2)***

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**HOLINESS AS THE GLORY OF MAJESTY**

We have seen that God is 'majestic in holiness' (Exod. 15:11).

Other statements are:

robed in majesty...girded with strength (Psa. 93:1); clothed with honour and majesty (Psa. 104:1); clothed with terrible majesty (Job 37:22); Honour and majesty are before him (I Chron. 16:27); his glory is above earth and heaven (Psa. 148:13); the glorious splendour of thy majesty (Psa. 145:5); how majestic is thy name in all the earth! (Psa. 8:1).

Passages in Psalm 29 are thrilling:

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength . . . The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. . . The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness . . . The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forests bare; and in his temple all cry 'Glory!'

God is the God 'who alone does great wonders' (Psa. 136:4). 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?' (Judges 13:18). Other statements are, 'For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods' (Psa. 95:3); 'O Lord my God, thou art very great!' (Psa. 104:1); 'Thy way,

O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?' (Psa. 77:13).

God told Moses that no man could see him and live, yet, 'while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by' (Exod. 33:20-21).

#### HOLINESS AS ELEVATION

With majesty, greatness and power is allied His elevated being. Nothing elevates Him, for He is 'the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity' (Isa. 57:15).

The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high (Isa. 33:5).  
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let thy glory be over all the Earth! (Psa. 57:11).  
I cry to God Most High (Psa. 57:2).  
Pay your vows to the Most High (Psa. 50:14b).  
For the Lord, the Most High, is terrible (Psa. 47:2).  
The Most High God. . . great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! (Dan. 4:2-3).  
The Most High rules the kingdom of men (Dan. 4:17b).  
Behold, God is exalted in his power (Job 36:22).  
Be exalted, O Lord, in thy strength! (Psa. 21:13).

The greatness, majesty and elevation makes the psalmist cry out, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it' (Psa. 139:6). Other statements are:

Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? (Job 11:7);  
Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:13, 14, cf. Rom. 11:33-36);

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? (Isa. 40:18).

God's uniqueness is His holiness and glory. Man is stunned by the greatness and *difference* of God.

#### HOLINESS AS FEAR-INDUCING ACTION AND BEING

The writer of Proverbs says that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (1:7), and, in fact, many other things (8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:27, 19:23). It is a holy awe and reverence of God which keeps man creaturely and in awe of the holy God. He who is 'terrible in his holiness' is 'terrible in his holy works' (see Exod. 15:11, II Sam. 7:23, Psa. 66:3, 5).

The Lord your God is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God (Deut. 7:21).  
O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God who keeps covenant (Neh. 1:5).  
Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he! (Psa. 99:3).  
A God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and terrible above all that are round about him (Psa. 89:7).

Fear comes from the natural disasters with which He visits man, but His jealousy terrifies men. He is jealous for His own name, His holiness, His people. He despises the false gods, the inadequate and demeaning worship of His people when it is inconsistent with His true being.

For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God (Deut. 4:24).  
You shall not bow down to them [other and false gods] or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God (Deut. 5:9).  
You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins (Josh. 24:19).

You shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exod. 34:14).  
I will be jealous for my holy name (Ezek. 39:25).

God hates all evil with a perfect hate, and He hates the false worship of His people, utterly rejecting it. It is not in conformity with His holiness.

#### **HOLINESS EXPRESSED IN AND BY WRATH**

Nowhere does the Scripture say that God is wrath. It does say that He is love (I John 4:8, 16) and that He is light, ie. holiness (I John 1:5). God is holy simply by being; He Himself is holiness. His wrath is something which is provoked in Him by evil, impurity, rebellion and injustice. Men may feel they can infringe God's holiness without judgement and punishment, but they are wrong. Habakkuk's statement, 'You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and you cannot look upon evil,' does not mean God is squeamish, but that He misses no evil, and when He sees it, will—at the right time—bring judgement upon it (Hab. 1:13, cf. Eccl. 8:11-13, Rom. 2:3-6). That God's loving kindness and forbearance puts off the day of judgement for the sinner does not mean judgement will not come—at the right time.

The following prophetic utterances show the uncompromising nature of God:

Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways: and I will punish you for all your abominations. And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who smite (Ezek. 7:8-9).

God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day who expresses his wrath every day (Psa. 7:11).

For all our days pass away under thy wrath. .. Who considers the

power of thy anger, and thy wrath according to the fear of thee? (Psa. 90:9, 11)  
O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath (Psa. 38:1).  
Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong (Hab. 1:13).

When false fire is offered then true fire comes from God to consume Nadab and Abihu: 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me' (Lev. 10:3). Again the day of the Lord is a day of wrath: 'A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish' (Zeph. 1:15); 'for wrath is upon all their multitude' (Ezek. 7:13b). Wrath is always being poured out upon the wicked: 'The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and the wickedness of men, who by their wickedness suppress the truth' (Rom. 1:18).

#### **CONCLUSION TO THE EXPRESSED HOLINESS OF GOD**

In our next chapter we will see God's holiness in its functional requirements, ie. the demands He makes upon His covenant people, Israel, the places and objects which they must see as being sacred to God and the covenant. That is not to imply that the utterances above are limited to Israel alone. They concern the nations of the world for 'God is one,' ie. His unity takes in all the earth. As Psalm 24:1 says, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (cf. I Cor. 10:26). Notice also that Paul says, 'I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.' He means that God as Creator has made nothing unclean by His act of creation. His (God's) own comment was, 'It is very good.' Universally then, man must recognise and become subject to God's holiness, otherwise he will be subject to God's wrath when he infringes that unique holiness.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

***GOD'S HOLINESS IN ISRAEL*****THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Islam, one of the world's greatest religions, shows a great weakness in that few of its scholars read the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. This is because they believe them to be outdated since—in their estimation—Mahomet is the last of the line of prophets. Since he post-dates Jesus (considered by Mahomet to be a great prophet), it is his message which is the latest (and last) communication of God. Hence the refusal of the Moslem to read an outdated message, which, although relevant in its own time, is no longer relevant. Thus the Law, the Holy Writing (Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), along with the Former and Latter Prophets, are of concern only to antiquarians.

Likewise, many Christians think that the Old Testament is outdated. Some even think there are two different concepts of God, one found in the Old Testament and another in the New Testament. This idea is ludicrous. God does not change between the last book of the Old Testament and the first of the New Testament! In fact, it is superficial reading which would come to such a foolish conclusion. The great truths of love and grace in the New Testament only have substance to those who see the Scriptures as a whole, and who recognise their innate unity. I say this because I can

imagine readers of the last two chapters may have been greatly amazed, even shocked, by some of the quotes pertaining to God's holiness. Even so, the exercise of being confronted by these passages is a useful one. We could equally have abstracted groups of utterances relating to God's loving kindness, forbearance, love and grace, and it may well be that this should be done to show that holiness is not without love, nor love without holiness. Although we haven't time to do all of that just now, it is certain that all honest readers of Scripture should be equally familiar with Old and New Testaments. That is why we must persist in our enquiry regarding holiness, and further lay our basis for understanding it, by some study of the Old Testament. Patience in doing this will have invaluable rewards.

**ISRAEL THE HOLY NATION****Elective Holiness and Love**

Israel is called by God's elective love: 'For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth' (Deut. 7:6). It is clear from this statement that Israel is to be God's holy people, elected by His love. In Deuteronomy 14:1-2, Israel has to have nothing to do with pagan worship and customs because, 'you are a people holy to the Lord your God.' The promise of Exodus 19:6 is remarkable: 'and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

**The Way to Being a Holy Nation**

Isaiah 5:16 says, 'God shows himself holy in righteousness.' Israel, if it will be—in practice—a holy nation, must do

righteousness. This is explicit in Deuteronomy 26:18-19:

And the Lord has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, that he will set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honour, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he has spoken.

Thus in Exodus 24, when the covenant with Israel is attested by the shedding of the blood, the people cry, 'All that the Lord has spoken [to us] we will do and we will be obedient.' This is supported by Numbers 15:40-41: 'So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God,' and Exodus 20, where the basic moral law is set out.

From the Godward side we see that God's holiness was redemptive, delivering Israel from Egypt, hence Moses and the people sang,

Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?  
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,  
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?  
Thou hast led in thy steadfast love the people whom thou hast redeemed,  
thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy abode (Exod. 15:11, 13).

Later we will see that God's holiness is redemptive, but here we can see that the formation of the holy nation is dependent upon God and His holiness.

#### **The Reason for the Holy Nation**

We can deduce many things from Old Testament writings which will guide us to understand the purpose of Israel's election. Doubtless Israel was to be a witness to other nations, to show God's holiness by its own righteousness,

and to be the true Kingdom of Yahweh in the midst of the other (idolatrous and rebellious) nations. It was to be the matrix from which God's Special One was to come, ie. the Son of Man, Son of God, Righteous Branch, the Davidic King, the Suffering Servant, the Messiah.

Taking all this into account, what stands out in the Old Testament is that somehow God was glorified in and by His holy people. Israel's God, Yahweh, was incomparable: 'To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One' (Isa. 40:25, cf. Exod. 8:10, 15:11, Isa. 40:18). God was unique amongst the gods, especially in regard to true holiness. To be God's people meant they must be holy, otherwise they would profane His name. If they were consistent to their calling in holiness (Exod. 19:5-6, Deut. 7:6), then they would attract the nations, for (i) the nations will flow towards Zion:

It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the Lord  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
and all the nations shall flow to it,  
and many peoples shall come, and say:  
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.'  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide for many peoples;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more (Isa. 2:2-4).

and, (ii) the temple will become 'a house of prayer for all peoples' (Isa. 56:7), that is Israel will be the holy sanctuary of God to which the nations will be drawn, finding at last

their true place of worship (cf. Ezek. 37:24-28). The same principle is found in Isaiah 55:5:

Behold, you shall call nations that you know not,  
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,  
because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

Israel, then, was to be God's witness, and especially to Him as the Holy One of Israel, the Holy One of all the nations. That is why Israel could proclaim:

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!  
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!  
The Lord is great in Zion;  
he is exalted over all the peoples.  
Let them praise thy great and terrible name!  
Holy is he!  
Mighty King, lover of justice,  
thou hast established equity;  
thou hast executed justice  
and righteousness in Jacob.  
Extol the Lord our God;  
worship at his footstool!  
Holy is he! (Psa. 99:1-5).

### The People of the Holy Covenant

In Isaiah 56:6-7, we saw that the foreigner who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast to God's covenant, will be brought to God's holy mountain and make himself joyful in His house of prayer. God's holy covenant was what mattered most in Israel.

In order to understand this, we must go back to God's many promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Behind what we call the covenant with Moses and Israel lies the great universal covenant, the Abrahamic covenant. This, in one sense, narrowed down to Israel and its twelve tribes, but it was destined to open wide to the nations of the world

when Messiah would come. In Luke 1:68-79, Zechariah the father of John the Baptist utters his great 'Benedictus.' He speaks of Israel being saved from its enemies 'and from the hands of all who hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his *holy covenant*, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham.'

It was because of His own holiness that God made the holy covenant with Israel. It is around that covenant that a holy people, priesthood, worship apparatus, sacrificial cultus and law is structured. When we look into it, we can see how God equipped Israel to learn His holiness, and to have one principle before itself continually:

The Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy: let him be your fear, and let him be your dread (Isa. 8:13).

### The Holy Things of God

The following is a list of persons, apparatus, places and things called holy: the priests and Levites (Exod. 29), the nation (Exod. 19:6), all the firstborn (Exod. 13:2), the tent of meeting, later 'the holy temple' (Exod. 29:44), the altar and all that touched it (Exod. 29:30f.), the offering (Exod. 29:27), ceremonial materials (Exod. 30:25), the feasts and holy days, the Sabbath, the furniture of the temple, the holy place and holy of holies, the first fruits, the anointing oil, the temple money, the priests' garments, the high priest's breastplate. Then there was the covenant, the law and the prophets. All of these things indicated the nature of God, the holiness of His people, the holiness of the covenant. The constant use of them helped to keep the true awe of God, and the knowledge of His holy being.

The very structure of the temple related to sacrifice for sins, for God's care of His people, for cleansing, well-being, worship and adoration. The holy law not only indicated the nature of God, but taught obedience, showing the way of

God and the way of man under God: that is, it showed God Himself. His name was holy (Lev. 20:3), His arm was holy (Psa. 98:1), His word was holy (Psa. 105:42), His Spirit was holy (Psa. 51:11, Isa. 63:10, 17). God was indeed 'the Holy One of Israel.'

By such teaching, cultus, rituals, law and prophets, the message was indelibly stamped upon the people. Even further, such holiness was itself dynamic in confronting evil, and powerful in redeeming those who needed liberation.

CHAPTER NINE

***GOD'S HOLINESS IN DYNAMIC ACTION***

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**THE NATURE OF HOLINESS**

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. Now light is not merely the absence of darkness; nor is darkness the mere absence of light. Darkness—especially moral, ethical darkness—is powerful in its own way. It has within it a perverse dynamic. It confronts light in order to destroy it. Of Christ the Word, John says, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1:5). He also says, 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men'. This connotes with so much of the Old Testament, especially many Isaianic passages where the Suffering Servant is to be 'a light to lighten the nations and the glory of thy people Israel' (Isa. 42:6, 49:6, cf. Luke 2:32).

Light, then, is dynamic; God's holiness is dynamic. It confronts evil to destroy it, and it works to redeem and bring renewal to creation. In Isaiah 42:6, God says to His servant Israel (the suffering servant, Messiah),

*I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations.'*

The universal nature of this is seen in Isaiah 49:6:

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Holiness is clearly redemptive, and whilst judgement cannot be absent from redemption, it must not be seen simply as a terminal matter, but as holy action which has redemption as its goal.

#### THE HOLY ONE, THE REDEEMER

Covenant was (and is) based in elective love, which is another way of saying it is of God's grace. Nothing in it is of man's initiative. God's covenants are unilateral. Covenant is not made Or secured by obedience. Obedience rises from the grace of covenant. In Exodus 2:23-24, we see that when Israel groaned in bondage under the Egyptians, God 'remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.' He then redeemed Israel from that bondage and brought it into the liberty of Canaan and new nationhood.

The term 'the Holy One,' especially as it is used in Isaiah, relates to redemption:

Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel (41:14).

I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you (43:3, 4).

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (43:14).

Our Redeemer—the Lord of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel (47:4).

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go (48:17).

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One (49:7). For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called (54:5).

In Hosea 11:9, His redemptive mercy is expounded:

I will not execute my fierce anger,  
I will not again destroy Ephraim;  
for I am God and not man,  
the Holy One in your midst,  
and I will not come to destroy.

Here we see that He is God and not man; He does not do what man would in similar cases. He does not come to destroy but to redeem.

The action of His holiness is beautifully seen in Isaiah 57:15:

For thus says the high and lofty One  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite . . . '

We note with delight that being holy, lofty, inhabiting eternity, yet He dwells with a view to reviving the humble and contrite one.

The force of His nature as Redeemer is not fully understood unless we see the many references in the Old Testament to His great act of liberating Israel from Egypt. This, to them, was practical and historical fact. They had no abstract concept of God as Redeemer. He had acted to make the nation, and He would go on acting consistently with His redemptive holiness. This was always the theme behind covenant. God—and Israel—knows no covenant which is not holy, no holiness which is not, in the ultimate, covenantal. Holy love is the true nature of God.

**A PARADIGM OF HOLY LOVE**

We come again to the pattern of redemptive holiness set out in Isaiah 6. It seems probable that Isaiah was already an active prophet, and came to the temple following the death of Uzziah. He received a vision of God, seeing His theophanic glory. The message of the seraphim, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,' caused a revolution in Isaiah's life.

So powerful was the message that the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of the seraphim. Likewise with Isaiah; the foundations of his thresholds also shook. He was in terror because (i) he believed he had seen God and so was doomed: no man could see God and live, and (ii) he was conscious of his own uncleanness, and the uncleanness of his people, over and against the holiness of God. The message of the seraphim had penetrated into his depths, and the horror of human impurity had shocked him to the core of his being.

For him the situation was hopeless. His cry, 'Woe is me! For I am lost,' echoes the existential horror of man who is separated from God by moral pollution, and whose whole being needs God in order to be truly human. The yearning of man for God makes horrific the separation from Him by his own innate evil. It is at this fearful point of human experience that God moves. His holiness is not destructive but redemptive. The same seraphim which cried, 'Holy, holy, holy!' now takes a white-hot stone from the altar of sacrifice, the place of redemption. Using tongs, and placing the coal on Isaiah's lips, the seraphim brings the healing message:

Behold, this has touched your lips;  
your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.

This absolution goes to Isaiah's depths. It releases him from

his impurity: it destroys his guilt. It sets him free. The glorious state of liberation pervades him, and suddenly he hears the voice of God saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' He who is set free, who is redeemed by holiness, is wholly surrendered to the God of grace. Isaiah now has his message—God's redemptive holiness—and his desire is deep to tell this liberating word. So he cries, 'Here am I! Send me.' In his voice is no resignation, no mere acquiescence, but a great yearning to bring to his people the revelation of the nature of God.

This, then, is the wholesome revelation of the nature of holiness. Rooted in covenantal love, Israel had always had the propitiatory ministry of the sacrificial cultus. Man could find relief for his sin and guilt in the grace of God. The message had always been:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and *I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life* (Lev. 17:11).

The message of redemptive love pervades the prophecy of Isaiah. With it is also the salutary warning that God's holiness judges evil and executes that judgement. Along with this are the many prophecies concerning Messiah and the Suffering Servant. As we shall see, these two merge and coalesce in the person of Jesus Christ, but for Israel the holiness of God is vital to its continued existence as the people of God. This holiness is also indispensable for the other nations who are also to receive the offer of holy redemption.

## ***GOD 'S HOLINESS EVERLASTINGLY VINDICATED***

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Many times Israel was told to sanctify the Lord, its God. To sanctify God means so to recognise His holiness that we give the credit, obedience and worship due to Him. Because Israel had been made a holy nation, it had to withdraw from profane things, and live consistently with its consecration to God, by God. The following statements confirm this:

You shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst (Lev. 15:31).

Tell Aaron and his sons to keep away from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they may not profane my holy name: I am the Lord (Lev. 22:2).

When separation to God is put in reverse and people separate themselves to the idols, then God says:

Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face... I will set my face against that man (Ezek. 14:6b-8).

They came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved (Host 9:10b).

In the light of His own being of holiness, God is jealous of wrong worship and defamation of His name:

You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good (Josh. 24:19b-20).

I will be jealous for my holy name (Ezek. 39:25b).

That He redeems even those who defame His holy name reveals the depths of redemption within His holiness, and this we shall later see.

### **MOSES THE DE-SANCTIFIER OF GOD**

Moses failed to sanctify God the second time at the waters of Meribah, because in the miracle of getting water to flow to the thirsty grumbling people, he failed to show the true nature of God. He did not show Him as the God of grace, willing to give water in spite of the grumbling of the people. Moses thus profaned Him in the eyes of the people. He acted as if God's holiness was a grudging dement, whereas, as Paul later put it, 'Love is not provoked.' By judging Moses, and refusing him entry into the promised land, God 'showed himself holy among them.' At all costs, God will preserve His holy name (Num. 20:12-13, 27:14, Deut. 32:5I).

### **THE CASE OF NADAB AND ABIHU**

In Leviticus 10:4-20, careful instructions are given to the priests in regard to the carrying out of worship through the sacrificial offerings. This is preceded (vv. 1-3) by the story of Nadab and Abihu who 'offered unholy [AV 'strange'] fire before the Lord, *such as he had not commanded them.*'

The result was that ‘fire came forth from the presence of the Lord and devoured them.’ Moses explained the matter to Aaron: ‘This is what the Lord has said; “I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” ‘

God, then, is ‘the Holy One’ and is ‘exalted in justice,’ and ‘shows himself holy in righteousness’ (Isa. 5:16). Isaiah 9 has a constant refrain for the judgement of God when they do not show God as holy by their own deeds of righteousness: ‘For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.’ As we have seen already, Israel is to regard God ‘as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread’ (Isa. 8:13).

#### ISRAEL PUNISHED FOR PROFANING GOD’S HOLINESS

The Book of Ezekiel explains the actions of God when Israel goes after other gods, and practises abominations. The book opens with a beautiful theophany, the revelation of God as the God of glory and fire. Herein lies His holiness. When Jerusalem becomes filled with impurity, the glory of God ascends and departs from the holy place. Israel deserves only destruction. Even so, God’s main intention is to again sanctify His holy name in the eyes of the nations before whom it has been profaned. Time and again the prophet returns to this theme. We need to read Ezekiel 36:20-29.

God says of Israel, ‘when they came to the nations... they profaned my holy name . . . But I had concern for my holy name. . . Therefore . . . I am about to act . . . And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name.’ How then will He do this? He will do it by cleansing and renewing Israel, the people of His name.

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will *put* my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances . . . I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.

This is further reinforced by Ezekiel 39:25-29;

‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget their shame, and all the treachery they have practised against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies’ lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more; and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.’

This whole passage is permeated with the richness of God’s holiness, which is here shown as love, grace and redemption. What we have to fix in our minds is that in both Old and New Testaments, God does not change. He is as jealous as ever for His own holiness. The work of the Cross is not primarily to redeem man: it is to vindicate God’s holiness. Then it is to purify man and make him holy, for this is the way God showed His holiness in Israel, and will show His holiness in all the world.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF THEODICY

Theodicy is really the explanation of how God can be holy in a world in which there is evil, and work out His justice

without injustice on His part. Theodicy is a matter which troubles man. Abraham's words are affirmation that God is just: 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Gen. 18:25).

Many people do not find the matter to be so simple. Their problem lies in one thing: they do not understand the nature of God's holiness. Approaching life from our soft, and often moralistic, points of view, we see God as severe, judgemental and tyrannical, or we see Him as indolent, careless, unable to punish evil and to establish the right. We need to research deeply the things of the Old Testament which we have discussed in these pages. There is theodicy enough in both Old and New Testaments, if we will but study the materials available. Because of their confronting nature, not too many have the stomach to do so. Only if we do examine these matters will we be able to face the theme of God's holiness and man's sanctification as given to us in the New Testament.

***MAN: HOLY AND UNHOLY***

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**CREATED MAN OF THE PURE HEART**

When God said, 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness,' then man must have been created pure. Paul's statement, 'To the pure all things are pure,' must point to a very wonderful state. Originally this must have been the state of absolute innocence. About such we can only speculate. The total absence of guile, fear, suspicion and the like must have been wonderful, for the obverse of these things is guilelessness, serenity, trust and joy.

Man was not merely a copy of God. He was an entity in himself, filled as he was with gifts, talents, abilities and motivation. A psalmist once said:

How precious is thy steadfast love, O God!  
The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings.  
They feast on the abundance of thy house,  
and thou givest them drink from the river of thy delights.  
For with thee is the fountain of life;  
in thy light do we see light (Psa. 36:7-9).

He shows man as revelling in God's love and drinking from 'the river of [his] delights.' A very beautiful picture. His remark, 'For with thee is the fountain of life,' opens up much of the nature of God and man.

God is the 'fountain of living waters' (Jer. 2:13), or, as another psalmist put it, 'All my springs are in you'

(Psa. 87:7). God is *the* fountain of life, but men are also fountains, deriving their life from the true Fountain—God. The writer of Proverbs says, ‘Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs [issues] of life’ (4:23). That which issues from God, flows into man, and so issues from him, to his world. If we see these issues as holiness, righteousness, goodness, love and truth—all of which are God Himself—then we understand how high and dignified a creature man is. He is intended to reflect and represent God in every way to the creation.

Man then was created pure, issuing forth life in its sparkling richness. No wonder he was crowned with glory and honour, and all things were put under his feet. Man was God’s crowning glory, exceeding even the highest celestial creatures, since none of them was created in God’s image.

Had man remained pure, then the story of history would have been different. It is useless to speculate, since this is not the way things have happened. Ecclesiastes 7:29 has it: ‘God made man upright.’ That shows us what man was. Another translation has it, ‘I find that God made man simple’ (Jerusalem Bible). It adds, sadly, ‘Man’s complex problems are of his own making.’

#### TEMPTATION TO IMPURITY

The idea of impurity for many people is related to sexual immorality and sexual deviations. The Bible, however, does not confine impurity to any particular form of sin. Anything which is sin defiles a man, particularly as it is born and bred in the human heart.

Even so, impurity which is sexual is significant because in the Scriptures idolatry is often depicted as ‘fornication,’ ‘adultery,’ and ‘uncleanness.’ Why is this so? It is because true sexuality is the most dynamic form of genuine love.

God can call Himself the Husband of Israel. The ultimate marriage is that of the Bride and the Lamb. Psychologically, no passion is as strong and intense as human sexuality, be it normal or be it illicit. The desire of human beings for direct and strong relationships is intense. So too is the need for emotional fulfilment. Sexual intimacy seems to offer satisfaction for these drives. For a man to love God with all his being is a relationship like that—emotional, mind-satisfying, and emotionally fulfilling.

In one sense, all forms of love, especially if they have sexual connotations, are irrational. No one can be wholly reasonable and calmly objective in the context of such a relationship, whether it is morally regular or immorally structured. If this were not the case, and if man would be wholly rational in love and sex, then matters of rape, sexual cruelty, aberrations and murder would be fewer in number than they are, if not wholly absent.

We need to understand this principle, otherwise we will not comprehend the nature of the initial temptation of man as we find it in Genesis 3:1-6. Man—that is, the man and the woman—had a primary relationship with God. They had an excellent mutual relationship. They had become ‘one flesh.’ The serpent sought to break their relationship with God and with one another. He insinuated doubt concerning God with his question: ‘Has God said, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden”?’ The woman answered that they were permitted to eat of all trees except the one in the midst of the garden, called ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ (Gen. 2:17). To eat of this would bring death. The serpent’s reply was, ‘You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be *as* God, knowing good and evil.’ They were already *like* God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but not *as* God which would have been an ontological (creational) impossibility.

The temptation took root. It seemed to be a good thing to

be as God, and to know good and evil. In passing, we may observe that there is no human being on earth who thinks he does not know what is good and what is evil. Every person believes that he (she) can make that distinction.

The point of our doing this brief study on man's fall is to see that in the moment man separated himself from God by seeking his own self-rule and self-life, then he imagined himself as a god. Idolatry was his idea of being a fountain of life within and of himself. The relationship with God was broken. Man was now impure. All idolatry is impurity. Proverbs 25:26 describes fallen man quite clearly:

Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

### THE IMPURITY OF THE HUMAN HEART

In many places, the Scriptures speak about the deceit of sin. Sin covers up itself. It makes out that it doesn't matter. It haps to sedate the moral sensitivity of man, even fallen man. He cannot see how little he knows the truth, how much he lives in deceit, especially self-deceit. It is the religious man who can live in the most terrible deceit; Jesus called such 'blind leaders of the blind,' and likened them to graves whitewashed on the exterior but filled with rotting and corruption inwardly.

Jeremiah had the key to human depravity. By 'depravity,' we mean that every part of man is infected with evil, even though it is not utterly and finally evil. The prophet said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt.' This is a radical statement concerning man's evil, but no less than the statement in Genesis 6:5: 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Add to this the post-Flood statement of God,

'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Gen. 8:21), and you sum up well the painful fact that man at heart is rotten. These statements are not made in cynicism, but only in realism. Man as the image of God is not cancelled out. Man is in a dreadful predicament, because being made in the image of God, and refusing to live in affinity with God, he has plunged himself into that state of being in which conscience gives him no peace whilst he pursues his own way. Isaiah speaks for God, and his words are wise: 'But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked' (57:20-21).

We need to go back to Jeremiah's comment on the human heart (17:9-10). He asks, 'Who can understand the heart?' God says, 'I only can search the mind and try the heart.' Why? Because it is so tricky a thing. Jesus' statement on the heart was no less strong:

What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man (Mark 7:20-23)

### AN EXAMPLE OF HEART-DECEIT, THE DECEIT OF SIN

There are two classic examples of the deceit of sin in the Old Testament. The first is Saul, who seemed to be a man of a dark spirit. He was certainly a remorseful man, but, seemingly, never repentant. He made various strange decisions and always rationalised them as correct. The most outstanding is found in I Samuel 15. A close study of the passage will show that Saul kept excusing his failure to obey God: 'I have sinned . because I feared the people'; 'I have sinned;

yet honour me now before the elders of my people.’ Samuel’s comment, ‘to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,’ has become a proverb. Saul’s life seemed to go downhill very quickly. He became insanely jealous of David, and yet without cause. He finished his time as king by taking his own life. Sin’s deceit had trapped him in his remorse.

The other example of the deceit of sin is David. His sin is well known—adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and then, virtually, murder of Uriah himself. A close study of Psalms 32 and 51 will show that David had somehow or other so rationalised his sin as not mattering that the substance of it had become sealed in his inner being. The prophet Nathan brought him to a recognition of his sin, and David was immediately and deeply repentant. Repentance helped to release him from the guilt of his sin. Repentance is a complete change of mind occasioned by God’s holiness and grace together. Remorse is the sorrow and anger that a person feels when he is found out but does not repent.

We use these two examples to show the deceit of the heart. Later we will need to return to the incidents in which David was involved. He saw that God required truth in the inward parts, the secret heart. It is here that deceit can be very clever and deeply dangerous.

CHAPTER TWELVE

***MAN’S NEED AND GOD’S PROMISE  
OF THE PURE HEART***

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**MAN’S ONTOLOGICAL NEED OF PURITY**

To be impure is not to be truly human: to be pure is to be truly human. At the beginning of our book we saw clear signs of man’s striving for purity in his religions, his conscious actions and his compulsive rituals. They are all tokens of the fact that man senses some need to be pure. We may even say he has an instinct for cleansing and holiness.

More than anything, man needs the pure heart. He needs to be rid of the heart which is ‘deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt,’ yet the very deceit of it keeps him wanting to retain it. That is his dilemma. Israel—where it had learned from its covenant, laws and cultus—knew God’s holiness to be uncompromising in judgement and punishment.

Many Israelites had learned the joys and benefits of holiness. Also the prophets had promised that this very holiness of God which judged and punished, was at heart redemptive and contained within it the love of God, His goodness and loving kindness. This was what made the promises intelligible and believable. It is at some of these that we need to look. They, and others like them, should be seen in the light of Jeremiah 33:8; ‘I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their

*sin* and rebellion against me.’ In this passage we see that guilt is itself pollution; God not *only forgives* guilt, but also *cleanses* it. This means that all promises relating to forgiveness also relate to cleansing. In fact Jeremiah has here given us a very valuable insight as to the nature of pollution and cleansing.

#### THE PROMISES OF GOD FOR PURIFICATION

We saw David’s response and reaction to the confrontation by Nathan the prophet, who made the accusation, ‘Thou art the man!’ David immediately threw himself upon God’s mercy, or, as we would say today, His grace. The matter of his impure heart troubled him and he cried out, ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.’ There was more to it than that. David the king discovered that the human heart is not only tricky. It is dangerous. It contains evil. The revelation of this is what drives many a person to the edge of lunacy and death. It is hard to believe all that we have thought about others indeed applies to our very own selves!

David cried, ‘Behold, thou desires” truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.’ He now knew there is a heart hidden even from the conscious thought of a human being. His horror increased, and he cried again, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.’

He knew in that moment what Isaiah knew in the temple before the vision of God. He knew what Peter knew when he saw the miracle of the catch of fishes. As a fisherman, Peter realised that this act came out of a dimension he had not conceived before. The scales fell from his eyes and he saw the holiness of the true Son of God. ‘Lord,’ he cried, ‘depart from me, for I am a sinful man.’ Not until a human

being has this vision of God does he know and hate the impure heart within him.

Such people are the true candidates for the promises of purification. Only to them do the promises have meaning. What then are the promises? Before we look at them, we must remember the many times—particularly in the Book of Leviticus—that the promise which attended the sacrifices was ‘and his sin shall be forgiven him’ (eg. Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 5:5-6, 10, 13, 16, 18). Yet, as the writer of Hebrews says, ‘If the worshippers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin,’ and adds, ‘For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.’ No wonder the Israelites, who never had complete assurance of eternal forgiveness and total cleansing, should look to another day. It must have seemed less than enough to David to go down to the temple to deal with the sin which had so deceived him: he looked for a direct act of God and pleaded for it.

Zechariah has a powerful promise: ‘On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness’ (13:1). In the very next verse comes the promise of cleansing from idols: ‘And on that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit.’

These promises link with the similar ones in Ezekiel, especially Ezekiel 36:25: ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.’

The promise in Isaiah 4:2-6 is very beautiful. It speaks of the deeply embedded pollution of the nation and of the occasion ‘when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgement and by a spirit

of burning.’ Doubtless the Holy Spirit is referred to, and we know from the Cross and Pentecost that the Spirit would apply the cleansing of the Cross to this ingrained filth.

Going back to Ezekiel 36:25-27, we again read:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Notice here the new heart for which David had prayed. Notice also that the coming of the Spirit would bring holiness, the heart-inspired obedience to God’s law. The action of the Spirit in Ezekiel 37 in bringing Israel to regeneration would have this result:

They shall not defile themselves any more with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

How many other references can be applied in particular to this future under Messiah? Isaiah 1:18 makes the amazing promise that the sins shall be scrubbed white as snow. Their glaring crimson shall fade into the intense purity of whiteness. The sins themselves will become purer Isaiah 44:22 says, ‘I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you,’ whilst Isaiah 43:25 adds, ‘I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.’

In the matter of forgiveness of sins, the promises of the new covenant stand head and shoulders above all prophecies:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by

the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

This promise is taken up in the New Testament many times (Matt. 26:28, Heb. 8:8ff., 10:16ff.), not only in literal quotes, but regarding the new way of forgiveness (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 10:43, etc.). It is on the basis of covenant that Zechariah prophesies over his son John the Baptist: ‘to remember his holy covenant. . . And you child. . . will go before the face of the Lord . . . to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.’ No wonder the prophet Micah cries, ‘Who is a God like thee, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?’ (7:18). He then goes on to show the nature of God in His love and compassion, and says, ‘He will again have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities under foot.’ He addresses God with joy: ‘Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea’ (7:19).

It needs then only John the Baptist to proclaim a baptism of repentance with a view to the remission of sin for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. In the midst of this excitement and preparation he cries, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ They were great days without doubt. The Kingdom was closer than the horizon, and the promise of purification and forgiveness of sins was about to be realised.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

***THE DAYS OF OUR PURIFICATION***

The powerful promise of Jeremiah 33:8 reminds us that to be cleansed from the guilt of our sins is also to be forgiven: 'I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.' For the moment, we will not seek to understand the 'how' of that act, but only the simple fact of it. When we scan the New Testament writings we discover the following:

**THE PURIFICATION OF THE CROSS**

Hebrews 1:3 says, 'When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.' In 9:13-14 of the same book, it is written:

For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

In I John 1:7, the writer states, 'if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin,' which seems to accord with verse 9: 'he will . . . *cleanse us* from all unrighteousness.' Paul, having had a vision of Christ on the road to Damascus and having spent three days in darkness

and deep thought, is spoken to by Ananias, the servant of God: 'And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptised, and *wash away* your sins, calling on his name' (Acts 22:16). Peter, speaking of the Gentiles who had received the gifts of repentance, faith and the forgiveness of sins, says, 'And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but *cleansed* their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:8-9). Earlier, the Jews who had heard the Gospel from the apostles were told, 'Repent therefore, and turn again, *that your sins may be blotted out*, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord' (Acts 3:19).

Peter says, 'Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth,' meaning by 'obedience' that they had heeded the Gospel. He is insisting that purification has taken place *by the Gospel*. The same thought is really contained in I Peter 1:2: 'obedience to Jesus Christ and for *the sprinkling of the blood*.' This is the purifying of which Hebrews 9:22 speaks: 'Indeed, under the law, almost everything *is purified with blood*, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins,' a thought which must have been in Jesus' mind when he said, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.' It enables the writer to speak of 'our hearts *sprinkled* clean from an evil conscience' (Heb. 10:22).

In the Book of the Revelation (1:5b), some translations have 'washed us from our sins' (AV., Jerusalem Bible), and others 'loosed us from our sins' (RSV, NIV., NEB). It does not really matter how the verb is interpreted here, for the fact is the same. To be washed and to be loosed are both effects of 'by his blood.' In Revelation 7:14, it is said of the great multitude that they 'have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

**THE CROSS IN ITS SIN-BEARING AND PURIFICATION**

We now come to what is deeply important to us. It is an attempt to answer the question, 'What happened up there on the Cross?' The answer must not be given in terms of clichés, factually true as they may be. For example, 'He died for our sins'; 'His blood was shed for us'; 'He was made to be a sacrifice for our sins'; 'God caused him to bear the punishment of our sins'; 'He washed away our sins in his blood.' In our modern way of talking, none of these is really intelligible. This only means, of course, that we have to say things in another way. We do not have to alter the truth of the statements given above.

What, then, happened on the Cross? To understand, we need to go back to the Old Testament, and our study of God's holiness there. It is the holiness God requires of man, but which, because of the Fall, man cannot give. God, in covenant, makes provision for man to come to holiness. First he is motivated to obedience, secondly he obeys out of grace, thirdly his failures are covered by the grace of sacrifice, and this increases his knowledge of God and his motivation to obedience, since genuine obedience is true holiness. At the same time, God's holiness is redemptive. It is there to justify man, but such justification cannot be genuine unless transgression of the law is atoned for (cf. Isaiah in Isa. 6—he needed the live coal to purify his pollution).

What then must happen upon the Cross is that Messiah must so take upon himself both the guilt and pollution of all sins, that in some act he may neutralise the very substance of sin, and so destroy and erase it. Such a task would be enormous, and it is difficult for us to know how it could happen. There are guides given in the Old Testament where, for example, an animal such as a lamb stands for the sinner. The

lamb becomes the victim of sacrifice and bears the sin of the worshipper, ie. he dies for that sin, since death is the outcome and penalty of the sin.

We must first understand the nature of sin, and that is difficult to do since we are all under its deceit and cannot be objective about it. Jesus could be objective because he had a pure conscience. He who never once sinned was most qualified to know the nature of sin. He alone would fully understand the meaning of Scriptures we now will quote, because only he went through the experience of them. In seeking to understand, we will consider three different sets of quotations.

**1. 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree'** (I Pet. 2:24a). Sin has many components, many constituent elements such as shame, guilt, pain, burden, fear, alienation, loneliness, pollution, frustration, rebellion, and the like. These are at once *both the nature and penalty of sin*. They constitute what a human being would have to endure to *bear* the sin he suffered for us. There was no way Christ could do this *unless he became identified with us*. Some kind of a union with us took place so that he might bear our sins. Thus Paul says, 'we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died' (11 Cor. 5:14). Similarly he says, 'I have been crucified with Christ,' ie. man was taken up into that Cross.

It may well be that the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 9:14) may have aided him to, and in, that union. We do not know. It may have been that that union took place when 'the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53:6), because it was written, 'he shall bear their iniquities' (Isa. 53:11). In fact it could be summed up in the words, 'God made him who knew no sin to *be sin for us*' (11 Cor. 5:21). In that act, it was our sin which he became. All of this means that he bore our sins—the penalty, guilt, and constituent elements—to the

very end. That is, he played them out, bearing them to exhaustion and extinction. As a result they are no more! Nothing is left, even to remember. That is why God does not remember them (Jer. 31:34).

2. **‘When he had made purification for sins’** (Heb. 1:3). What must have happened here seems clear enough. Christ must have somehow taken upon him the moral-ethical pollution of the human race. Doubtless if he took their sins upon him, then he took the pollution of those sins upon him as well. This required his identification with each person, and that fact we have tried to explain above. One thing was in his favour: he was the one man whose conscience was unsullied. Only of him could it be said, ‘He was truly pure in heart.’ We have some idea of the moral power of a conscience relatively free from guilt. The experience of justification with its ‘no condemnation’ gives us some understanding of the new moral powers which come to a person who is justified. *Jesus never needed to be justified.* Only because he was pure could he bear impurity. Even so, the experience must have been horrifying to him. When we say his blood washes us pure, we mean that somehow his death (blood represents death wrought in violence) has effected the purification of our sins. In Jeremiah 33:8, we saw the link between guilt and pollution. What must have happened was that he received into himself our impurity and his purity was stronger than it and, having wrestled with the impurity, overcame and destroyed it.

3. **‘God set him forth as a propitiation by his blood’; ‘God ...sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins’** (Rom. 3:25, I John 4:10). Propitiation is that which averts the wrath from the object of the wrath. Not to be understood as a bribe, it is that act which God effects to avert, from the sinner who deserves it, the wrath of the law and Himself

upon sin. However painful it may seem to say it, propitiation is initiated by God and completed in willingness by His Son who bears the wrath due to man. This will seem unintelligible unless we understand paragraph (1.) above, where the components and constituent elements of sin (pain, shame, burden, pollution, fear, alienation, loneliness, confusion, etc.) are seen to be part of God’s active wrath. As Augustine put it, ‘Man carries about in his conscience every day a testimony to the wrath of God.’ Likewise the saying of the psalmist, ‘God is angry with the sinner every day.’ God’s wrath is not sin, but sin is God’s wrath, ie. the existential situation of guilt is the way God works out His wrath. This is described in Romans 1:18-32. The daily state of guilt is the daily experience of wrath. The added dread of a final judgemental reckoning, ie. a ‘day of wrath,’ intensifies the present suffering of that wrath.

If we have grasped what is written in our last section, then we must know that the cost of the Cross (the suffering, shame, sin-bearing and pollution-acceptance) must have been immense suffering. We can call it titanic in its dimension. Yet it had to be all of that to deal with our sins in *the light of the holiness of God.* Even so, it was that very holiness which judged sin, which effected the work of the Cross, and which now redeems all who are drawn into its triumph. For this reason, we need to know something of what happened there, not only that we may be released from explanatory cliches, but that we understand the vast love that ensured the suffering was such that it would cover and destroy our sins.

#### CONCLUSION TO ‘THE CROSS IN ITS SIN-BEARING AND PURIFICATION’

The *effects* of the actions we have described above can be seen when we look at I Peter 2:24 and 11 Corinthians 5:21 in

full. I Peter 2:24 says, 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.' This shows the purpose of his death to be 'that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.' We can see that the effect of death was intended to produce holiness. Likewise in 11 Corinthians 5:21, 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'; ie. 'that we might become the righteousness of God' must mean, 'that we may become holy.' If we recognise from Hebrews 1:3 that Christ effected our purification, then we can grasp the full meaning of Hebrews 9:14, 'how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' The effect of the total cleansing of our consciences from dead works (ie. sins, cf. Heb. 6:1) is that 'we might serve the living God.' This service of God is true holiness. II Corinthians 5:14-15 carries the same idea, for his death was in order that 'we should not henceforth live unto ourselves [cf. man's autonomy as sought in the Fall], but unto him who died for us and rose again.'

We can see that the new covenant surpasses all the elements of the old but retains the same principles of holiness. The Cross and Resurrection are in fact the triumph of God's holiness in that (a) they destroy unholiness and impurity, (b) they redeem, and (c) they draw the redeemed on to holiness of both status and life.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

***FORGIVENESS AND  
PURIFICATION APPLIED***

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We might as well state now that the plan we have to discuss the matter of God's holiness, as set out in the New Testament, requires as its foundation the inner purification of God's elect people. It is sometimes said that justification deals with the penalty of sin and its guilt, and that sanctification deals with its pollution. This is not all the truth of the matter. In Jeremiah 33:8, we saw that guilt is something a man has to be cleansed from. We cannot divide the guilt and pollution of sin. They are not two sides of the one thing; they are very much the one thing.

Holiness and sanctification may possibly be differentiated, but without purification from sin there can be no basis for, and no thought of, true sanctification. It is, then, immensely important that we see how, and by whom, purification is applied. We also need to know the measure and quality of the gift of the pure heart which is given to repentant and believing man. It is obvious that radical purification can only be by means of the atonement, and the atonement of the Cross must somehow be applied to the human person. We will now endeavour to see how that is accomplished.

**PURIFICATION APPLIED TO THE SINNER**

In Chapter 15, we will see that the work of holiness and sanctification is Trinitarian. That is, Father, Son and Spirit all work to effect sanctification for, and then in, the believer. This work is first exterior to the person and then interior in the person. The Father initiates the work of the atonement, the Son executes it (by aid of the Father and the Spirit), and then the Spirit applies it. Strictly speaking, all three members of the Godhead apply it, but we will particularly focus on the Spirit as the agent of sanctification.

**THE SPIRIT PROPHESED AS THE AGENT OF SANCTIFICATION**

In Ezekiel 36:25-27, we saw that God will regenerate the hearts of His people. This will be by cleansing them, renewing their hearts and spirits and putting His own Spirit within them. This promise is also given in Ezekiel 11:19-20 (cf. 18:31), and in 37:1-14 and 39:29 the promise of the Spirit is made. Only by the Spirit will God's people become holy.

In Isaiah 4:2-4, we saw that God would effect purification in Jerusalem 'by a spirit of judgement and by a spirit of burning.' In Matthew 3:11-12 the baptism in (by) the Spirit is to effect both cleansing and judgement.

**THE SPIRIT IS THE AGENT OF SANCTIFICATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

When, therefore, we come to the New Testament, we expect this work of the Spirit. John 16:7-11 informs us that the Spirit will convict of sin, righteousness and judgement. This is the work of the Spirit prevenient (prior) to His bringing

the gifts of repentance and faith, and so, following, forgiveness, justification and purification. A careful reading of Acts 10:43-44, 11:13-18 will show, first of all, that the preaching of Christ's Lordship brought faith, especially in the forgiveness of sins, and secondly, that the gift of the Spirit was then received, for with the Spirit came faith, repentance and forgiveness. This is later explained in Acts 15:8-9 where the Spirit is said to have cleansed the hearts of the Gentiles by (their) faith. A reading of Acts 10:1—11:18 (along with Peter's further explanation of it in Acts 15:7-11) will show that, whereas the Jews had been the holy nation alone, now Gentiles were included in the holy people of God, ie. the church (cf. I Peter 2:9-10).

I Peter 1:2 and 11 Thessalonians 2:13-14 show the initial work of consecration-sanctification: 'chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.' The words 'chosen and destined' speak of an act before the beginning of time. If 'sanctified' here means consecrated or set apart for belief, then this sanctification could also have taken place before time. In any case, in time, it takes effect (as above) with both Jews and Gentiles. It may well be linked with baptism when the person's cleansing takes place in water; but only the Spirit could effect true cleansing, as we see in I Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5-6. In I Peter 1:2, the sanctification is not something limited or transitory; it is not exhausted prior to time or at the moment of baptism. It is permanent, set for all time. It leads to faith in Christ.

In 11 Thessalonians 2:13, the pattern is similar: 'But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.' That is, God chooses (elects), the Spirit sanctifies, and the person believes in Christ.

The inward work of the Spirit is seen in 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5-6. I Corinthians 6:11 says, 'you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' The work of the Spirit is first to purify, and then to sanctify. There is first washing (the basis of holiness) and then sanctification, ie. separation from the world and inclusion in the people of God. Notice that, as in I Peter 1:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the work of sanctification preceded the act of faith in Christ. Here in I Corinthians 6:11, it precedes justification. This is most important, as we will later see. Of course we see the whole conversion complex of conviction, repentance, faith, forgiveness, sanctification and justification as simultaneous, and we need not quibble about the order. Even so, it must have significance.

We have said that it is an inward act of the Spirit. Titus 3:5-6 shows this:

*He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

It may well be (as with I Cor. 6:11) that Paul is pointing to baptism, but then not as a mere ritual. Peter says, 'Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience' (Jerusalem Bible: 'a pledge made to God from a good conscience,' I Pet. 3:21). He means the conscience has been cleansed by true baptism, ie. the inner work of the Spirit effecting the purification of the Cross (cf. Acts 15:8-9). Paul is told, 'Arise and be baptised, washing away your sins' (Acts 22:16), and in the same breath, 'that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 9:17).

Whatever happens in baptism must not be thought of as merely located in ritual and confined to its time without reference to the prevenient and postvenient actions of the

Spirit. What happens is 'tine washing [laver] of regeneration' and 'renewal in the Holy Spirit.' All of this parallels the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:24-28. If we seem unable to explain it all, it is because the work is hidden from our eyes. We have no psychology to account for it. It is 'secret' and 'mysterious,' not in any occultic sense, but because it is the hidden interior work of the Spirit of holiness. In some senses it is hidden from prying eyes.

When Romans 1:4 speaks about 'the Spirit of holiness,' then the statement covers the powerful work which purifies man. When, in Hebrews 9:14, the blood of Christ is said to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, this twin action must be effected by the Spirit. For man's total conscience to be wholly purified by the atonement is so radical a work as to be incomprehensible. 'You were washed' must not be taken lightly as a handy rinse. The 'Spirit of judgement and the Spirit of burning' can alone remove what is otherwise indelible, can alone go down to the depths of the deceitful human heart and make it pure.

Yet, without the work of the Cross, the Spirit is helpless. We say this most reverently, knowing that man's purification calls for the gifts of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. When in Romans 15:15-16 Paul says he has 'written

*...very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit,'*

he must mean that the people—the Gentiles—who were once considered wholly unclean must have required a thorough work of 'the laver of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit' to make them acceptable to God (cf. Acts 15:8-9, 26:18). In Acts 20:32, Paul can speak of his listeners (Jews and Gentiles) having 'the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.'

**THE APPLICATION OF FORGIVENESS BY THE SPIRIT**

We saw in John 16:7-11 that the Spirit works prior to repentance and faith, and then brings those gifts to man. Acts 10:43-44 told us that the gift of the Spirit was given simultaneously with the gift of forgiveness. This exactly agrees with Acts 2:38: 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (cf. 3:19, 9:17, 22:16, 26:18). If we remember the connection with the guilt of sin and its need to be cleansed (Jer. 33:8), then we can see that Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 are parallels. There is no cleansing without forgiveness of sins, no forgiveness of sins without the cleansing of them.

An example of this is seen in Romans 8:1 -3. Verse 2 says, 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.' Man's liberation from sin's condemnation comes by the Spirit, but then only as the work of the Cross is understood by the believer and made real by the Spirit. This is surely the meaning of 11 Corinthians 3:17, for in its context it is saying, 'Only the Spirit can give the assurance and experience that one has been freed from the condemnation of the law, grace having triumphed in the atonement.'

We conclude, then, that forgiveness, justification and sanctification are all effected in the believer by the Spirit, who himself brings the work of the Cross to his subject and sets him free. That the believer is always dependent upon the Spirit once the initial sanctification has been effected, goes without saying. That is why one must always be led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

***THE POWER OF GOD IN SANCTIFICATION***

Our intention is to look at the modes of living in holiness, but we must first be fortified by the knowledge that the Father, the Son and the Spirit have always been about this work, ie. in election, in the giving of both law and covenant, in the action of the holiness of the Godhead, and in the ministry of redemption which itself is rooted in and springs from God's holiness. In order to do this, we need to look at the nature of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in regard to holiness.

**THE HOLY GODHEAD****The Father's Holiness**

Jesus' ascription in prayer was 'Holy Father' (John 17:11), yet his term also was 'righteous Father' (John 17:25), and this virtually means the same. That the Father is the one we meet in Isaiah as 'the Holy One of Israel' is not in doubt. In Revelation, He is ascribed as Holy, firstly in the Isaianic Trisagion (Isa. 6:3), 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty' (4:8), and then in 15:3-4, 'For thou alone art holy.' Luke 1:49 has, 'Holy is his name,' and Hebrews 12:10 speaks of sharing in 'his holiness.' I Peter 1:15-16 declares Him to be the God of holiness of Leviticus 11:44:

'be holy, for I am holy.' When His children call on Him as Father (I Pet. 1:17) then they are to act holily. As Jesus said, they must pray 'Our Father . . . hallowed be thy name.'

We must, then, identify all we know of Yahweh in the Old Testament with the Father of the New Testament.

### **The Son's Holiness**

Jesus as man does not seem to have innate holiness ascribed to him, which is understandable. However, as Messiah, as the Son of God, he is acknowledged by the spirits as 'the Holy One of God' (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34). The angel tells Mary, 'the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.' In John 6:69, Peter acknowledges him as 'the Holy One of God,' and in Acts 3:14, he accuses Israel of denying 'the Holy and Righteous One.' The early church thinks of him as 'thy holy servant, Jesus' (Acts 4:27, 30). If the passage of I John 2:20 refers to Jesus, then it is equivalent to the term in Isaiah, 'you have been anointed by the Holy One.' As we will later see, it is he who sanctifies men, and he who makes men holy must be holy above and beyond them.

### **The Spirit's Holiness**

There can be no question that the title 'Holy Spirit' tells us he is holy, the Spirit of holiness. Romans 1:4 may refer to Christ's own spirit, as indeed may Hebrews 9:14 as well, but it seems that Jesus' spirit as a man was only holy because he was possessed by the Holy Spirit: thus the term 'spirit of holiness' must equal 'Spirit of holiness.' As we have seen in our previous chapter that he is the Sanctifier, then he must be intrinsically holy.

We conclude, then, that the Godhead is essentially holy, so that God will be the source, the fountainhead of the

holiness which man requires in order to be sanctified and to live a holy life.

### **THE SANCTIFYING GODHEAD**

We need to keep in mind always that no work occurs in creation, providence, redemption and the renewal of the universe which is not Trinitarian. In a simple way, we can speak of the Father as being the Initiator of all works, the Son being Mediator, and the Spirit being Agent. Whilst these are convenient terms, they do not wholly cover the activities of the Godhead. Since all three work as one, these functions are not sharply distinct from one another. Even so, such a description can help us to understand the workings of God.

### **The Father Sanctifies**

Jesus prays to the Father, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth' (John 17:17). In John 15:3, he speaks of the Father 'cleaning the branches' (rather than pruning). If baptism is 'an appeal to God for a good conscience,' then it is He who purifies the conscience, or gives purification in baptism. It is the Father who makes Christ to be sanctification to us (I Cor. 1:30). It is He who has chosen us for sanctification (II Thess. 2:13-14), and our sanctification is His will (I Thess. 4:3). He has chosen us for this (Eph. 1:4), and called us in holiness (I Thess. 4:7). He will also sanctify us in body, soul and spirit so that we are kept sound and blameless at the coming of Christ (I Thess. 5:23-24). He is constantly working for this (Col. 1:22-23) and is able to keep us from falling and to present us spotless before the presence of his glory, with rejoicing (Jude 24).

Simply on this textual score we can see that the Father

works in sanctification, but we must look at the wider perspective, especially as we saw it in the Old Testament. God will not tolerate evil or impurity in His creation, but His holiness is also that love which sets out to redeem His elect whilst it destroys the evil. He sanctifies not only the heart of man but also purges all His creation of impurity.

#### The Son Sanctifies

Because God has made him our sanctification (I Cor. 1:30), then Christ must be sanctifier. In Hebrews 2:11, he is specifically identified as such: 'For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren.' Hebrews 10:14 certainly makes him sanctifier: 'For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.' In I Corinthians 6:11, we saw the work of the Spirit in sanctification, but note it is all 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Before going to the Cross, he said, 'And for their sake I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth' (John 17:19).

The aim of that work of grace was that he 'gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds' (Titus 2:14). It was his blood which purified the consciences of men (Heb. 9:14), and this blood goes on cleansing (I John 1:7). This sanctification is shown in the attention which he gives to his church. He not only gave his life for her, but his aim was to 'sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word' (Eph. 5:26). This includes all who are in the church. Previously he had said to his disciples, 'You are clean through the word which I have spoken to you' (John 15:3). He has effected that sanctification by which they will have an inheritance (the inheritance), an inheritance by faith (Acts 20:32, 26:18).

#### The Spirit Sanctifies

When we come to sanctification—ie. being accounted holy and living a holy life—we are now not so much speaking of the work by which the Spirit initiates us into the faith and the church, as of the daily work which the Spirit does within us with a view to our ultimate holiness. Yet New Testament writers also speak of a sanctification which is unilateral, as indeed is God's covenant of grace. Paul speaks of us being washed, sanctified and justified (I Cor. 6:11), and we need to note that sanctification precedes justification. This is also the case when Peter speaks of our being 'chosen and destined by God the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood' (I Pet. 1:2). Again Paul says, 'God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth' (11 Thess. 2:13b).

In two of these cases, sanctification comes before belief in Christ, ie. in the truth of the Gospel. It means that God's sanctifying work is prior to redemption. In these three cases (above) the Spirit is involved. This must mean that, before time, the Spirit set us apart as and for the people of God, ie. for the salvation to be given by the Father. The people of God are holy because God has set them apart. A principle in the Mosaic covenant was that 'the altar sanctifies the gift (offering),' ie. what is set aside by God for himself is considered holy in his eyes. So it is with God's elect: 'You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exod. 19:6); 'Be [you] holy, for I am holy' (Lev. 11:44). This sanctification by the Spirit is not merely a status, but issues in action:

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people. (I Pet. 2:9-10a).*

What was true of old Israel is now true of the church. It is a holy people, by the Cross and the Spirit. The coming into this holiness, Peter can say, is the cleansing by the Spirit of the (Gentile) hearts by faith (Acts 15:9), and Christ also speaks of those ‘who are sanctified by faith in me’ (Acts 26:18).

When we look at the holiness which the believer practises through the Spirit, we see that sanctification of life, ie. practical holiness, is based in justification. The taking away of guilt breaks the innate power of sin which is guilt itself. It is sufficient for us to know that the Spirit sanctifies in the sense that he consecrates us to God and his service, and— having purified us—keeps us in the life of holiness through the means of prayer, worship, fellowship and service. In all these aspects, he is the Spirit of holiness.

#### CONCLUSION

The Scriptural statements we have gathered together no doubt establish the fact that God—Father, Son and Spirit —out of their love and holiness, desire to bring the elect people to sanctification so that they may participate in the new covenant, the Kingdom of God, and the ultimate inheritance. Even so, there is something missing from this chapter. It reads too much like a textbook, too little as a rich, warm and personal document. Even when this is admitted, it can nevertheless be seen that the objective facts are powerfully supportive for each believer. The accusation of evil powers comes to us daily, and we are tempted to doubt the concern which God has for us. A strong look at the holiness of the Godhead, and the sanctifying powers exercised by the Father, Son and Spirit give us the boldness we need in the face of the opposition from evil. The task of sanctifying sinful man is certainly no small one.

#### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### ***GOD WORKING, IN AND FOR OUR SANCTIFICATION (1)***

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#### **GOD'S DEMANDS TOTAL FOR HOLINESS**

There are commands in the New Testament such as ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ (I Peter 1:16) and ‘You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matt. 5:48). With these commands there is the warning, ‘follow after. . . holiness without which no one will see the Lord’ (Heb. 12:14), but for the most part the New Testament tells believers that they have been sanctified, that they are saints, that they are holy, and that they must pursue practical holiness because the Father has sanctified them. Even so, the demand for holiness of life is implied in the commands, directions and precepts for the life of goodness, truth and righteousness. Every call for obedience is really a call for holiness.

It has been pointed out by many that the demand for perfection (Matt. 5:48) is not necessarily a demand for impeccability, ie. utter faultlessness; in fact, perfection has primarily to do with growth and maturation. Matthew 5:43-48 is more about principles than about holiness. Jesus is speaking here of relationships and attitudes. In these, one is to be full and mature. In a sense this is, of course, holiness, for the emphasis is not really on flawlessness. So it remains

as a demand which does relate to holiness. Paul, too, says he is always pressing on towards maturity (Phil. 3:10-14), and says he has not yet attained it.

The demand for total holiness would cause the Christian to come to despair in his constant failure. It is necessary, then, that we take an overview of the whole matter of holiness. The terms we will now use may prove somewhat inadequate, but may still help us to see that, since it is God who is the prime mover in holiness, then we need not despair

### GOD THE ONE WHO EFFECTS HOLINESS

We have already concluded that God is the only one who can effect holiness, particularly because of the sinfulness of man. The following aspects of the work of sanctification are intended to help us see that it is God who moves, and not man. Later we will discuss man's response to God's work of grace.

#### Elective Grace

Before creation, God chose us to be holy and without blame (Eph. 1:4). That is why we are called 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved' (Col. 3:12). I Thessalonians 4:7 says, 'God has not *called us* for uncleanness, but in holiness.' The fact that God moves to sanctify is seen in I Peter 1:2: 'chosen and destined by God the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.' The order is (a) election, (b) sanctification, and (c) belief in the Gospel. There is an echo of this in I Peter 1:22, where purification precedes belief in the Gospel. In I Corinthians 6:11, the order is 'washing, sanctification, justification.' Similarly in 11 Thessalonians 2:13b, 'God chose you from the beginning to be saved through

sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.' Here again sanctification precedes faith. We are not saying that Paul's order is a chronological one—he may in fact have intended to present all elements as simultaneous—but, whatever the case, the emphasis is on God working before man could believe.

#### Separative Holiness

Such passages as I Corinthians 1:2 ('to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints'), I Corinthians 6:11 ('you were. . . sanctified') and Romans 1:7 ('the beloved of God, called to be saints'), all show that the separation of believers *from* the world and *into* the people of God, is an act done by the Father. This is affirmed in I Peter 2:9-10 where the people are called 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.' This action does not necessarily have to effect purity as such. In John 10:36, Jesus speaks of himself as the one 'whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world,' and in John 17:19, he says, in regard to his disciples, 'for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.'

#### Practical or Experimental Holiness

The believer is called upon to be holy, and to live holily. He has been purified and regenerated, and in the light of these things he seeks to live a pure life. On the one hand he rejects every defilement, and on the other is positive in obedience. He also fights the powers of evil. He seeks to do the will of God. This practical holiness is what occupies him all the time. Shortly we will examine this matter of practical holiness, and seek to show that God is working in it all the time. In his failures to perfect holiness, the Christian is so often in despair. He is subject to accusations from the

powers of darkness. That is why he needs to know that God is working.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

***GOD WORKING, IN AND  
FOR OUR SANCTIFICATION (2)***

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**HOLINESS WE ARE CALLED UPON TO DO**

**Eschatological Holiness**

Elective holiness in its various forms presupposes that the subject of holiness—redeemed man—will be holy at the end time. God chose us for complete holiness, and whilst His work is perfect, and His sanctifying of us is flawless, yet we will not be holy practically until the end. It is the hope of ultimate holiness that keeps the believer working in the matter of holiness; hence John’s statement, ‘And every man who hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure’ (I John 3:3). The assurance of eschatological holiness is of enormous encouragement, even to the weakest of believers.

We see then that what God has elected will surely come to pass. He is the Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end). Unless we see this panoramic view of God’s active grace in history, our own actions will cause us to be crushed. We will ask, ‘What then can I do?’; but the question must be, ‘What can be accomplished, God helping me?’

Some scholars like to speak of the believing man’s *status* (or, *position*) of holiness and his *condition* of life. They mean that God, through His work of the Cross, of Christ and the Spirit, has brought us to be accounted as holy. Whilst our personal condition in life may not be fully holy, we are permitted—indeed commanded—to fill up any lack in *condition* so that it will be equal to *status*. The fact of status encourages us in seeking practical holiness.

There are certain statements in the New Testament which suggest the believer can effect holiness, and that he should. II Corinthians 7:1 says, ‘Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.’ I John 3:3 speaks of the believer ‘purifying himself,’ whilst 11 Timothy 2:20-21 says,

*In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work.*

Certainly man is said to participate in the life of holiness.

**WHO WORKS IN THE MATTER OF HUMAN HOLINESS?**

This question may seem to be only of academic interest. The sensible man argues thus: 'God has said He has made me holy. I believe that. Indeed I believe this is of His grace. He then commands me to be holy, and to cleanse myself from every defilement, making holiness perfect in fear of Him. He has told me to pursue holiness. I must, then, purify myself, knowing that He has, anyway, sanctified me.'

The statement of the sensible man is good. It does, however, leave out the problem we have when we seek to purify ourselves and pursue holiness. We find that we fail. We do not know what has gone wrong. We despair. If we had understood our innate weakness and the way in which God works, we would have no need to despair.

**GOD IS WORKING**

Elective holiness must mean that what God has begun He will complete: 'And I am sure that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it right up to the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:6). Again, 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12b-13). Paul also speaks of the power within us (which is) able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20), whilst also saying, 'I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me' (Phil. 4:13). In another place he says, 'Get strong in the Lord and in the power of his might' (Eph. 6:10), and prays in the same letter for his readers, 'that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man' (Eph. 3:16). There are other references to the supply of

God's power for the believer. All of these assure that the power we need for holiness is always available, and in that sense, no believer is ever denied necessary power.

We see two things: first, that God always works in the believer, and second, that power for the believer is never lacking. All of this should encourage us, but we also need to know the innate weakness and the inability of the Christian to effect holiness. Commanded though he may be to effect holiness, he simply cannot do so. Why is this? The question leads us on to face the facts of man's moral helplessness.

**MAN'S MORAL POWERLESSNESS**

One assumption made by Christians is: 'If God commands me to do something then I will be able to do it, for He will enable me to do so.' This assumption is correct. What is not stated is the fact that, whilst God's command may well presuppose His supply of power to fulfil it, yet there are other facts which seek to prevent success. We must never assume that *of ourselves* we can accomplish anything of goodness, righteousness, holiness, love and truth. We must also recognise an unfailing principle: 'Whenever I want to do right, evil lies close at hand' (Rom. 7:21). We will have good intentions, but not the power, *of ourselves*, to accomplish the good or desist from the evil. Evil, *of itself*, is stronger than we are, *of ourselves*.

Paul says, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me' (I Cor. 15:10). His statement is surely clear enough. We accomplish nothing of a moral nature without the grace of God. In 11 Corinthians 12:1-10, we see the explanation of weakness and the enabling power of grace given clearly. Paul has been given a

‘stake in the flesh’ to keep him humble because of visions he has been permitted to see. Without the restraint of the ‘stake in the flesh’ Paul will grow inordinately proud. He wishes to be free of the stake because it is troublesome to him. God assures him he needs the affliction (‘a messenger of Satan to harass me’), saying, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Paul then says, ‘I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, *that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong.*’

#### IN WHAT WAY IS MAN WEAK?

A mouse, as a mouse, is not weak. By comparison it is weaker than an elephant, but in fact, as a mouse, it is neither weak nor strong—it is a mouse! A man, as a man, like the mouse, is a creature. Had he never sinned he would never have been more—or less—than a man. As a man he is wholly dependent upon God to live as His image and likeness. We do not then speak of man being either weak or strong in *himself*. We simply speak of him being a man. In union with God he is truly man, with all the capacities that God has given him as a human. Unfortunately, sin has morally crippled man: he has no power *of himself* to do moral good.

A statement such as I have just made is infuriating to man’s pride. He cannot accept this moral limitation. He sets out to prove he can do moral good, but whilst he can effect *relative* good, he cannot practise *absolute* good, for ‘There is none that doeth good, no, not one’ (Rom. 3:12, Psa. 14:1-2); ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone’ (Mark 10:18). The New Testament warns against thinking ‘good works’ will save us, indeed, even that we have any such reality as ‘good’ (see Eph. 2:8-9, 11 Tim. 1:9, Titus 3:5). We conclude then that whilst man can do evil

freely, and accomplish works of all kinds, he cannot *of himself* accomplish anything of moral worth. Paul’s statement of Romans 5:6—‘while we were still weak’—tells us of man’s innate moral inability.

The problem we face in the matter of living holily is that when a person has been purified by God, sanctified, and set on the life of practical holiness, he constantly stands in danger of thinking he has somehow achieved power. He has, of course, *received* power but not achieved it. Moreover, that power with which he is supplied operates only when he is subject to God. If he forgets this then he is in danger of what has been called ‘triumphalism.’ Triumphalism really amounts to a Christian thinking he now has unlimited power, and can accomplish all he sets out to do so that his life is wholly victorious. Because he is sure he succeeds, he fails to recognise the sins which he commits. His overweening pride is such that he lives arrogantly, claiming to be impeccable. He needs to remember Paul’s warning: ‘Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands [ie. *of himself*] take heed lest he fall’ (I Cor. 10:12, cf. Rom. 11:20, Prov. 16:1 8).

Later we will examine in closer detail the Christian and his inability to deal with sin, as the matter is set out in Romans 7:14-25. At this point, however, we need to be encouraged by the fact that God is working and, despite our weakness, faults and failures, He will bring us to the fullness of holiness. Hence we repeat, ‘He that has begun a good work in you will complete it right up to the day of Jesus Christ,’ ‘it is God who is working in you, both to will and work for his good pleasure,’ and ‘he who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.’

We have already seen in Chapter Fifteen that the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—never ceases to work in the people of God and in sanctifying power.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

***SANCTIFICATION  
BY GRACE***

This is a good point in our study to introduce the idea of sanctification by grace. Although the term as such is not found in the New Testament, it is certain that the idea is present, for all to do with salvation is by grace. Sanctification is part of the wholeness of salvation. When we say, ‘sanctification by grace,’ what we must insist is that it is not as justification, that is, a gift received about which we can do nothing, and in which we are not required to work. Sanctification is certainly a gift, but in the receiving of it, we are required to work, for holiness is something we live, and in which we act.

**SANCTIFICATION A GIFT**

Everything in the Christian life is a gift, namely faith, repentance, forgiveness, purification, justification, love, the Holy Spirit, adoption, and necessarily sanctification. We may think of holiness as a state of heart, but sanctification is the act of God by which it has been effected. In the process of living our practical holiness (as we saw above), it is the working of God which enables us to succeed. This is His grace, ie. ‘my grace is sufficient for you.’ We need to recognise our human weakness and His enabling grace. Paul’s prayer of I Thessalonians 5:23 (‘May the God of peace him-

self sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’) shows us that God keeps us continually. Other Scriptures which we have quoted in our last chapter tell us the same. Paul thus speaks of God not withholding His own Son but giving him up for us all. He asks, ‘will he not also give us *all things* with him?’ (Rom. 8:32). The answer must be ‘Yes,’ for God ‘is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made to be our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.’ Paul then adds, ‘therefore, as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord” ‘ (I Cor. 1:3-31). He obviously means that God has given us all things in Christ so everything must be of grace, and not of man.

**CHRIST OUR SANCTIFICATION**

What does it mean that Christ has been made to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption? It must surely mean that apart from Christ we have none of these four things, and in him we have them all. Romans 5 tells us that Christ’s obedience is accounted to us. In verses 14-19, Paul is saying that Adam’s disobedience is accounted to us as though it were ours. Death is ours because of Adam’s sin: we are under condemnation. Now that we are in Christ, Adam’s sin is not accounted to us, for Christ has broken the power and penalty of sin. In Christ we have Christ’s obedience accounted to us, and so we have life.

A number of Reformed theologians, especially John Knox, insisted that Christ’s whole life has been accounted to us. Whilst imputation of sin has been taken away, and imputation of Christ’s (legal) righteousness has been imputed to us, so—even further—Christ’s very life has been given as a

gift to us, ie. we now have his imparted righteousness. This means that all his obedience is accounted to be ours, and all his holiness comes as a gift to us. Thus one theologian who strongly pursues this theme can make such a statement as:

*In Jesus, in his birth and sinless life, in his death and resurrection, there took place a holy and awful judgement on our flesh of sin, and an atoning sanctification of our unholy human existence.*<sup>1</sup>

To speak of 'an atoning sanctification' is unusual, and Torrance's theology has to be read thoughtfully for his meaning to be understood. What he appears to mean is that the life of Christ from birth to end, to resurrection and ascension, now becomes ours, and not only as a resource for us but as the basis of our acceptance. This dynamic life comes to us via the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He says:

*[Not] until he had sanctified himself and perfected in our human nature his one offering for all men, [not] until he had made once and for all the sacrifice to take away sin. . . could the Holy Spirit be released in all his sanctifying and renewing agency to dwell with man. Then he came down freely upon the Body that had been prepared, the Church purchased by the blood of Christ, and lifted it up, unhindered by guilt and sin or the divine judgement, to participate freely in the very life of God.*<sup>2</sup>

Participation in the life of God is, of course, holiness.

Whatever Torrance's thought may be, the term 'atoning sanctification' is a useful one. We saw that elective sanctification was prior in time to the Cross, though not prior to the Cross in God's counsel. The Cross was clearly intended to bring us not only to justification, but also to sanctification. Sanctification was to be of grace.

<sup>1</sup> *Theology in Reconstruction*. T. F. Torrance. SCM. England 1965, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Torrance. pp. 247-248.

### SANCTIFICATION A DEFINITIVE ACT OF GOD

In order to underline the grace of sanctification, we need to see that sanctification is a definitive act of God. We need to retrace our steps, ie. to look afresh at some of the Scriptures referring to our sanctification. The first set would be those which speak of us having been 'called to be saints' and which tell us we have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, namely I Corinthians 1:2, I Peter 1:2, II Thessalonians 2:13. The second set would be those which speak of purification, such as, 'Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word' (Eph. 5:25-26). This refers to a definitive act, as does Titus 3:4-7. Likewise I Corinthians 6:11: 'you were washed, you were sanctified,' and, again, Acts 15:9: 'cleansed their hearts by faith.' No less also, the indication in Acts 22:16 that Paul would have his sins washed away in baptism. The elective element of I Thessalonians 4:7 tells us of the source: 'God has not called us in uncleanness [ie. only in 'cleanness'] *but for* sanctification.'

Thus we see that because God has taken the initiative, the act is both definitive and of grace. This is indeed cheering because, being monergistic in nature, the recipient has no need to fear that in some way he may have damaged the fact and experience of sanctification.

### SANCTIFICATION SEEN AS DEFINITIVE IN HEBREWS

We have so far avoided making reference to the idea of sanctification in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is now time to look at it. The writer employs the Greek verb *hagiazō*, which carries many of the ideas we have already used, namely 'to separate,' 'to consecrate,' 'to purify morally,'

and 'to declare God's holiness.' A key to the writer's use of the term is found in 13:12b: 'to sanctify the people through his own blood.' In 2:11, Christ is the sanctifier: 'For he who sanctifies [Christ] and those who are [being] sanctified have all one origin.' Christ's sanctifying of his people in this context relates to death (2:9-10).

When we come to 9:13-14, then we see that whereas the old ritual could only effect bodily (ritual) cleansing, the blood of Christ dynamically purifies the conscience from its entirety of dead works, ie. sins:

For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

We need now to read 10:10-14:

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are [now] sanctified.

What then is meant by 'we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,' and, 'by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are [now] sanctified.'?

The first statement must mean that Christ's obedience as a man and the giving of his life (his blood) must have effected what God required for the objective purification and consecration of man. And what was effected? It was surely that inward cleansing spoken of in 9:14, so that the purified and consecrated people may now acceptably serve the living God. 'Once for all' is the thrilling statement that the atonement cannot be reversed, and so, likewise, the sanctification.

The statement, 'he has perfected for all time those who are [now being] sanctified,' simply emphasises that the new covenant, once promised but now fulfilled, assures them, for ever, of their sanctification, ie. their acceptable relationship with God.

Thus it is that the Letter to the Hebrews, perhaps more than other statements, points to definitive sanctification, and so to the incomparable grace of God.

#### SANCTIFICATION BY FAITH

Because there is a view of holiness which speaks of sanctification in much the same way as justification, ie. it is a gift and gift only, and there is no question of man working at all, it is necessary to enquire what Paul understands in Acts 26:18, 'to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' The term 'sanctified by faith in me,' really parallels Peter's argument of Acts 15:6-11, where he claims that the Gentiles have been cleansed by God through the Cross and the Spirit, and are now part of the holy people of God (see I Pet. 2:9-10). This has called for faith on their part, ie. to believe the Gospel. Indeed the whole passage of Acts 26:16-20 refers to Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and for Jews it would be remarkable that the Gentiles should be saved and sanctified through an act of faith in Christ.

'Sanctified by faith,' then, is a term which covers both forgiveness of sins and sanctification, remembering that sanctification means entrance by Gentiles into the holy people. Paul, in Colossians 1:12, makes a parallel statement, 'giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.' Note that here

and in Acts 26:18 it is the inheritance which is connected with the saints and light. Further to this is Paul's word to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:32, 'And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.' Here grace ('the word of his grace') is the means by which believers are built up for their inheritance, the inheritance which is for all who are sanctified. By 'sanctified' here we can understand 'those who are separated to God' or 'those whose sanctification—elective, practical and eschatological—is now completed.'

On these grounds we conclude then that the statement 'sanctified by faith' does not parallel 'justified by faith.' The fruits of faith are actions of righteousness, and whilst the 'fruit of the Spirit' is (are) a gift, yet they must be exercised in faith. If ever we can speak in the practical sense of being sanctified by faith, then it must be along these lines.

It is also helpful to note that faith is born out of the revelation of grace (Rom. 3:24 *passim*, 10:17), and that faith always works in recognition of the grace that evoked it and sustains it.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

***THE GRACE OF LIBERATION (1)***

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**INCENTIVES TO HOLINESS OF LIVING**

There are three great incentives for holiness: they are love, gratitude and fear, and we will examine them later. Love is the basic response to God's love: 'We love, because he first loved us' (I John 4:19). Gratitude is the response to God for everything, ie. generally for providence, and in particular for the gift of salvation. Fear is true reverence for the Lord, so that we fear to grieve Him, and we seek to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

We will never respond in love unless we see the totality of God's love. Only when we see the magnitude of God's redemptive work will genuine gratitude be evoked in us. The psalmist said, 'there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared' (Psa. 130:4). The powerful liberation that the Father, Son and Spirit effect in us is the dynamic spur to holy living: 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart' (Psa. 119:32, AV). The Jerusalem Bible has it, 'I run the way of your commandments, since you have set me free.'

**MAN NEEDING TO BE SET FREE**

Jesus said, 'everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin' (John 8:34). The *doulos*—ie. the slave—had no place to

exercise his own will: he was wholly subject to his master. The natural man—the man without spiritual, Gospel revelation—will never be able to understand the slavery of sin, especially his own slavery to it. This is because man does not really know God, and since sin can only be understood in the light of the holiness of God, he cannot recognise his slavery. Sin is deceitful and covers those aspects which would astonish man, were he able to know them.

We need to know the nature and extent of the Fall, in order to assess the degree of man's bondage. To seek his own autonomy over and against creaturely dependence upon God, brought him into bondage under many enemies. We need to discuss these enemies and the power they exercise over man. The enemies are as follows, and their grip over man by reason of his guilt is indicated in the references given.

### 1. Sin

Sin has two elements which give it great power, namely its penalty and its pollution. Penalty relates to guilt, and pollution to shame. In Romans chapters 5 to 8, sin is given the definite article 'the'. It is 'the sin,' ie. a personalised power. 'He who commits sin is the bondsman of sin.' Under law and guilt, sin has dominion over its subjects. Men fear death because of guilt, and so the guilt of sin has entrapped them. Nor can they do anything about its pollution. If guilt and pollution could be destroyed, the power of sin would be broken.

### 2. Satan, the World Powers and the World System

These three enemies work as the one complex or system. Hebrews 2:14-15 gives us the clue to Satan's power:

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might*

*destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.*

Satan has power by reason of man's fear of death. Man's fear of death is really fear of judgement (cf. I John 4:16- 18; 'fear relates to judgement/punishment'). Satan is the accuser (Rev. 12:10, cf. John 14:30, Jude 9), and alarms man through his guilt. That is why 'the whole world is in the power of the evil one,' and doubtless this began with the Fall. The world is that system under Satan, 'the ruler of this world,' as Jesus called him (John 12:31, 14:30). We saw in Hebrews 2:14-15 that he rules his slaves through their fear of death (see also I John 5:19 and Eph. 2:1-3).

Satan has under him certain angelic powers, said to be fallen from heaven (Rev. 12:1-10, cf. Luke 10:18-19). These 'principalities and powers' are man's enemies (cf. Gal. 1:4, Eph. 6:12f., and Rom. 8:37f.). They have their power over man by reason of his guilt, and man's involvement in their system means he is a guilty person (cf. Gal. 1:4, I Cor. 1:21f.). The cruelty of domination of these powers can be seen in Galatians 4:8-9 and Colossians 2:15-20, where they are called 'elemental spirits of the universe,' 'gods who are no gods.' The world system of Satan and his powers keeps man in bondage by reason of his guilt (cf. Gal. 1:4, 4:6).

### 3. The Flesh

'The flesh' is humanity as tainted by sin, ie. affected by sin. It is a principle of autonomy in which man refuses God's overlordship. Thus 'to set the mind on the flesh is death,' 'the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God: it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot,' therefore, 'those who are in the flesh cannot please God' (Rom. 8:6-8). Man's fear of death is linked with the flesh (Rom. 8:12-13), and the flesh thrives on human pride, especially its notion that it can keep the law. The flesh works in mind and body

through the desires and the intellect (Eph. 2:3). Thus guilt also keeps man in bondage to the flesh.

#### 4. The Law

This law which is God's law is also known as 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2). This is because when man breaks it, he is thus sinning, and so doomed to death. In another place, Paul speaks of 'the curse of the law' (Gal. 3:10). Law is certainly as powerful as the other enemies, keeping its subjects in bondage by guilt, as we see from a close study of Col. 2:13-15).

#### 5. Death, God's Wrath, Conscience

The fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15, cf. I John 4:16-18) is really fear of the judgement of the law, ie. the wrath of God. Thus these three enemies are linked with the law. I Corinthians 15:55-56 says, 'The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law,' ie. if man had not guilt from sin he would feel no sting in death. Man's dread of the wrath of God also relates to his guilt. In Romans 1:18-32, God's wrath is being revealed on men who do wickedness. We mean that the constituent elements of sin (eg. pain, shame, burden, guilt-feelings, judgement anticipation, pollution, alienation, confusion, rebellion and the like) are really the wrath of God working in the conscience, ie. 'God is angry with the wicked every day' (Psa. 7:11).

Shakespeare said, 'Conscience doth make cowards of us all.' This is true because our guilt unseats us: we lose confidence because we have offended the law, evoked God's wrath, and so feel the curse of God in our consciences. Thus the New Testament speaks of 'a conscience of evil,' ie. 'a consciousness of evil,' which equals 'an evil conscience.' Man without faith is conscious of evil, yet not in a good

way. He labours under the burden of his conscience, and this only because he has sinned (see Heb. 9:14, I Tim. 1:19-20, Titus 1:15, Heb. 10:2, 22).

In this complex of law, death, God's wrath and conscience, man is terribly bound. All evil stands continually accusing man, alarming him up to God's wrath in a most cruel and insinuating manner. God is thus seen as a cruel tyrant, a grim and judgemental Deity, and man is demeaned and denigrated. The law stands as grim and unrelenting, and conscience so works as to put man through great torture. Death offers nothing but punishment, destruction and dissolution. Whilst the law is 'holy. . . just and good,' as also 'spiritual' (Rom. 7:12, 14), and God's wrath is wholly justified and without evil, yet man sees these two as wrong and unjustified. Man's conscience as created by God is also good (Gen. 1:31) but now appears as a torturing enemy. Thus what is good is used by evil to torment man, and keep him in wretched slavery. Man certainly needs to be delivered from his enemies and come to count law, God's wrath, and conscience as his friends.

#### 6. Idols

This subject is a powerful theme in Scripture. Idols seem on the one hand to be dumb and static, but in fact they are most dynamic. Man is built for worship and service, and he will give such to the idols whilst withholding it from God. Paul—with his Judaic background—informs us that demonic powers have their seat in idols (cf. I Cor. 10:19-22, cf. Lev. 17:7, Deut. 32:17). Idol worshippers are 'joined to their idols' (Host 4:17), and are in bondage to them. Worship and service represent man joined to God, and living in love and grace. Man's deepest guilt lies in idol-worship and he will not be free until he turns 'from idols, to serve a living and true God' (I Thess. 1:9).

**MAN'S TOTAL BONDAGE**

The few remarks we have made above are somewhat like a soulless street directory which indicates localities but does not communicate the dynamics of them—the life, action and reality of their situations. Most of man's emotional history is experienced *vis-a-vis* the bondages of his enemies. Evil seems set to make man appear (and be) despicable. It seeks to denigrate God's creation. It persecutes man in all forms of obscenity and moral vandalism. Man is crushed in the face of his own guilt and his moral weakness. His enemies are such that he can never—by his own efforts—defeat them. Hence his life is a deep misery.

If one wonders why God in His power does not liberate man sooner than He does, then we fail to understand that often our sin must 'find us out' before we can realise its power, and the extent of its cruelty. Paul says most interestingly in Romans 7 that sin uses the law to deceive man, but then it oversteps itself and the law unmasks sin as 'exceeding sinful,' ie. 'sinful beyond measure' (see vv. 8-13). Man needs to be brought to the end of himself. It is God's work to do so, and then His time to bring His liberating grace to bear upon the needy subject.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

***THE GRACE OF LIBERATION (2)*****THE CROSS AND LIBERATION**

As we will see, it is primarily through the work of the Cross which we call 'atonement' that man is liberated. Israel had so often been under 'other lords,' as Isaiah 26:13-14 tells us:

O Lord our God,  
other lords besides thee have ruled over us, but thy name alone we  
acknowledge.  
They are dead, they will not live; they are shades,  
they will not arise;  
to that end thou hast visited them with destruction and wiped out all  
remembrance of them.

A divided or shared lordship is no lordship, and Israel did not know the undiluted and powerful joy of a single-minded submission to Yahweh. James 1:8 says that a doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways. The truth is that God shares His Lordship with none. The injunction of grace is, 'You shall have no other gods before me.'

When we speak of the bondage of man, we ought to recognise that world history has been the battle between God and the rebellious powers of evil. The struggle has been titanic and great issues are at stake. The clever strategies of Satan and his celestial minions are not to be scorned: evil is quite brilliant. The deadly nature of bondage must be seen in the litter—strewn across history—of broken lives, mentally

split persons, men and women suffering shame and anguish for their degradation, and that stream of humanity which has not only become defiled but angrily defiles the nest in which it lives. Incest, rape, violence, vandalism and murder cannot be said to be on a minor scale. The promise, then, of freedom is not only a dire necessity to humanity; without it the entire humanity is lost. Apart from what some theologians call 'common grace,' the whole world would be engulfed in dreadful evil.

### THE PROMISES OF LIBERATION

The passage of Isaiah 26:13-14 quoted above promises deliverance from the 'other lords.' Single-minded submission—evoked by holy love—is the only way of peace for persons and nations. We have seen the constant statement in the prophets: 'Your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.' His holiness is the source of our liberation. So the prophets open up a new day for Israel. Yet not only Israel: we saw that the Suffering Servant is to be 'a light to lighten the nations [Gentiles] and to be the glory of thy people Israel.'

In Zechariah's 'Benedictus,' we saw the statement that God would 'remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, *being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*' ~

There are other New Testament promises. The angel said to Joseph, 'you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21b). John the Baptist cried, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29). Jesus' own announcement was,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus has other promises and intimations of freedom. In Luke 10:18, he says, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,' and in Luke 11:14-26 he discusses the matter of the power of Satan and of himself, as Messiah. In verses 20-22, he speaks of his intention to defeat Satan:

But *if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoil.*

Later—just prior to the event of Passion Week—he says, 'Now is the judgement of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out'; 'the ruler of this world is judged' (John 12:31, 16:11). John later says, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil' (I John 3:8), and Peter tells the Gentiles at Caesarea, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power . . . he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him' (Acts 10:38b). Momentous things happened in his ministry, and of even greater moment were the things about to happen, ie. at the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension.

### THE ACTS OF LIBERATION

The historic event then to take place has its origins in Genesis 3:15, called 'the proto-evangel': 'I will put enmity

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:18-19, cf. Isa. 61:1-2, cf. 58:6: 'Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?'

between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.' Christ is that holy Seed to whose coming Israel had long looked. Now he was here. A battle of incredible proportions was now to take place in the arena of history. Secular estimation of the event may see it contemptuously as a minor fracas in the Palestinian city of Jerusalem, the attempts of a revolutionary to overthrow the religious leaders and their system, the Sanhedrin of his day. True understanding places it as the most significant happening in all human history.

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus said to his disciples, 'the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me' (John 14:30b-31). The meaning of the passage is, when paraphrased:

The prince of darkness, Satan himself, is coming to attack and destroy me. The only one he can harm is the one in whom he has something, ie. sin and guilt, the only basis for accusation. He is the accuser, yet he cannot harm me because he has nothing *in* me, ie. *on* me. Even so, I go to the Cross because that is what the Father has commanded me to do. Now I will have everything of Satan *in* me, because I will have the sins of the world *on* me, and this is what Satan will have *on* me, to accuse me. Bearing the guilt of the world is what the Cross is all about and I must obey the Father and bear it, by means of which I will defeat Satan, and, in fact, destroy him.

This expanded paraphrase is reading into this passage what is explicit elsewhere. For example, Jude 9 shows Satan accusing Moses of mortal sin. Michael the archangel and prince of the resurrection does not seek to defend Moses from Satan's accusation, but says, 'The Lord rebuke you.' The great rebuke of evil is founded by the work of the Cross.

As Jesus was leaving Gethsemane, the chief priests, elders and officers of the temple came to apprehend him. He said to them, 'When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the

power of darkness' (Luke 22:53). What did he mean? He meant that the climax of the struggle between evil and him was about to take place. In some sense it was the hour and authority of darkness, ie. darkness was to come with authority to apprehend Christ. Later Paul said, 'None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' The 'rulers of this age' was a term he used for the principalities and powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12).

#### THE CROSS THE ARENA OF BATTLE

What then happened on the Cross? The focal action was Christ's bearing of the sin of the human race. In guilt lies the grip and power of sin: no sin, then no guilt, and where no guilt, no power of evil, no grounds for authentic accusation.

[Christ] bore our sins in his own body on the tree (I Pet. 2:24). [He] suffered, the just for the unjust (I Pet. 3:18).

God made him to *be* sin for us (11 Cor. 5:21).

The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors... He was numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12).

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5).

This is my blood of the new covenant which is for you and for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28).

Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:28)

These references are all significant because they tell us that somehow Christ dealt with the guilt and sin of man. Just *how* he dealt with it is not immediately apparent from the texts quoted, but a good knowledge of the Hebrew view of sin, the Mosaic sacrifices and the like really tells us that

when he 'bore our sins in his body,' then he was taking the sins of man into himself, and thus identifying with the sinner himself. That is, he bore what we might call the constituent elements or components of sin such as pain, shame, burden, loneliness, fear, pollution, confusion, alienation, degradation and lostness. He suffered these in his humanity, bearing them to their exhaustion, and extinction. We called this 'substitution in identification.' In this vein, Paul says, 'We are convinced that if one died for all then *did all die*.' This catches up the idea that 'our old humanity was crucified with him,' and which is repeated in statements like 'I have been crucified with Christ' and 'they that are Christ's crucified the flesh' (ie. in his death). So when he died we all died (Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20, 5:24). It means that somehow all evil was drawn up into his Cross so that 'He [God] judged sin in his [Christ's] flesh' (Rom. 8:3). What it all amounts to is that he bore the totality of mankind's guilt, taking away (by bearing it) the penalty of sin, and destroying the pollution of sin, thus breaking its power.

That this act was complete and sufficient, we can see from the following:

'It is finished!' (John 19:30).

He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26).

Christ. . . offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:12).

By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

Where there is forgiveness of these [sins], there is no longer any offering for sin (Heb. 10:18).

To add anything to the Cross is to imply that it was not, in itself, sufficient for all guilt of all men for all time. The completeness of the work of the Cross ensures the completeness

of deliverance from guilt, and from pollution. This is indeed the work which was to baffle the powers of darkness.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

***THE DEFEAT OF ALL EVIL,  
AND ENEMIES*****THE GOOD ENEMIES**

Not all sinful man's enemies are evil. The law of God, the wrath of God, and the conscience of man were never intended to be the enemies of humanity. Guilt set man against God, His law, and of course His wrath. These enemies—so called—are glad not to be man's enemies. *God's law* was not primarily given to created man to bring him into guilt and under condemnation. This happened because of sin. A reading of Psalms 1, 19 and 119 will give us an idea of how beautiful, functional, dynamic and helpful was God's law. As Paul said, the law was 'holy, good and spiritual.'

There is a sense in which the law is *only* for evil men, and we should closely read I Timothy 1:8-11 to see this. For example, 'the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane.'

However, the justified man is no longer afraid of the law, for Paul describes our new condition now that guilt has gone: 'But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit' (Rom. 7:6). Later we will need to return to this very significant theme

which is so powerful in the process of sanctification.

*The wrath of God* does not exist for one who is justified: the Cross has dealt with his guilt, and he is free before God. He knows only God's love. *The conscience is* different now that it has been 'purged from dead works to serve the living God' (Heb. 9:14). We must see the conscience as pure, so that man's fear of law and wrath has been erased. It is then that we understand that 'to the pure [in heart] all things are pure' (Titus 1:15), for now redeemed man can be 'holding faith and a good conscience' (I Tim. 1:19), we can draw near to God 'with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience' (Heb. 10:22). Because man is right with God, his former good enemies turn to be his friends. Not so the evil enemies.

**THE EVIL ENEMIES**

When we come to sin, Satan, the evil principalities and powers, demonic forces (these often linked with idols and idolatry), the idols themselves, the flesh and death, we know that we face deadly enemies. Does a believer have to be dominated by any or all of these? Is there no way he can be free? Can he remain free?

The general answer to these questions is that *when Christ destroyed the guilt of sin he broke the power of all evil*. When this truth and power is applied to each enemy, its defeat is seen, and, by faith, appropriated. We will first examine this principle of enemy-defeat in looking at sin, its former power, and our present release and freedom from it. Virtually the same principle applies, then, to all the enemies.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We have already listed the enemies of man in Chapter 19. The order of listing here is somewhat different. for certain reasons. but the point is the same. Man, especially Christian man, must face these enemies in his pursuit of holiness.

## 1. Sin

The promise of Matthew 1:21 was, 'he will save his people *from* their sins,' ie. not '*in* their sins.' Jesus said, 'He who commits sin is the bonds slave of sin, but if the Son shall make you free, you shall be *free indeed.*' In this respect Romans 6:7 is important: 'He that has died is *justified* from sin.' The word 'justified' means that the penalty has been remitted: man is accounted righteous, ie. he is free from sin's condemnation. Romans 8:1 says, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' In another section we will talk more regarding justification, but here we can see it sets a person free from guilt.

We have said that the power of sin lies in guilt. This is true both legally and psychologically. In Romans 6:12-14, Paul says:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

His conclusion within this chapter is that when Christ died he bore the penalty of sin—that is grace. You, the sinner, are accounted as having died with him: that is the meaning and significance of baptism. Whilst sin may remain in you, *it has no right over you.* You are as one who received the penalty of your own sin. Since you are justified from sin, remember that you are under grace and not under the law that once condemned you. Simply refuse sin when it attempts to dominate you, for grace is first liberation, and then present power to aid you to love by its enablement, based upon the death of Christ—your death. Supportive of this is I Corinthians 15:55-56, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" The sting of death is sin,

and the power of sin is the law.' Here again 'the power of sin is the law,' ie. its guilt with its constant demands for impeccable performance. Now it can make no demands: 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:1-2).

Not only has the penalty of sin been taken away in the death of Christ, but also sin's pollution. We have looked at this in detail, and need not pursue it here, but when the person is purified, the relief is immense. The positive response to freedom from guilt and pollution is intense love and gratitude, along with willingness to obey. In the atmosphere of these, sin cannot flourish. Forgiveness and justification, when known and accepted by faith, keep the believer strong against sin.

## 2. Satan, the World, the World Powers

This whole system with which the flesh, sin and death are allied (they are all one bunch) has been virtually rendered powerless by the work of the Cross. Hebrews 2:14-15 now makes sense. Christ's aim was 'to destroy the works of the devil' (I John 3:8). He did this by taking away the great 'power of death' (ie. the psychological power of death). This he did by taking man's guilt and destroying it. Now Satan has nothing in the believer because no longer does he have anything on the believer. Thus, 'that he [Christ] might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil,' means that Satan is now 'paralysed,' 'unemployed,' 'put out of action' (cf. Rom. 6.6). In this sense 'the prince of this world is judged,' and is 'cast out' (John 12:31, 16:11).

Now a believer who stands 'steadfast in the faith,' and who 'resists the devil,' will find him fleeing (I Pet. 5:9, James 4:7). So John could say, 'I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and you have overcome the evil one' (I John 2:13-14). Revelation 12:11 tells us that believers

have conquered Satan the accuser, 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.' Satan is a defeated foe, but this victory of Christ is only realised in the context of faith.

When Satan is defeated, so are his henchmen. Colossians 2:14-15 makes it clear that their defeat was sealed because Christ nailed to his Cross 'the bond which stood against us with its legal demands,' ie. the demands of law for judgement upon our sins. The whole Satanic system has its back broken by Christ's redemption. It is shown as ineffective, ie. 'destroyed.' When Paul says, '[Christ! gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age' (ie. this corrupt world and its system), he is saying the same as: 'But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal. 1:4, 6:14). In other words, the world system with Satan its head, its mighty celestial powers and its organised system of rebellion against God, has been defeated by the taking away of the guilt of the human race.

### 3. The Flesh and Death

It may seem strange to link these two, but, as we will see, *the flesh is* man's endeavour to maintain himself in the face of death which is God's judgement on sin. If death has no power, then the flesh loses its grip: where there is no fear of death, there is no power of the flesh. This we will see, but in doing so need to look at the power of death. Already in Hebrews 2:14-15 we have seen that, through fear of death, man is under Satan's power. In I John 4:18, the writer says, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.' Notice that fear of punishment is really fear of judgement. In this context John is saying that the perfect love of the Cross has cast out fear of punishment because of

propitiation, ie. the bearing of the judgement by Christ. One is now *as* Christ, here, in this world. That is, *one is as innocent of guilt as is Christ himself!* That is why the saints in the Book of the Revelation 'loved not their lives even unto death.' Hence the believer can cry, 'O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory,' and go on to explain that the sting of death lies in sin, and the power of sin in the condemning law. 11 Timothy 1:10 says clearly that Christ 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.'

What relationship has *death* with *the flesh*, and *the flesh* with *death*? Man, we know, 'through fear of death is all his lifetime subject to bondage.' Paul Tillich once said, 'Man fears death not because he has to die, but because he deserves to die.' In other words, it is not merely dissolution of the body which troubles him, although that also may well cause him anxiety or despair, but it is the fact of 'beyond the death, the judgement.' Paul's powerful declaration about man deserving to die because of a corporate act of sin in Adam, may cause anger in some and bewilderment in others. For those who react that way, the reading of Romans 5:12-21 calls for a radical change of mind regarding sin and death. Paul in this passage speaks of sin reigning in death, and of death reigning through one man's sin (ie. through Adam's transgression), so that man's predicament is a lethal one. When, however, Christ dies and rises again, he shows, by that very death and resurrection, that man's entail with sin is broken. '[He] was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). This means that fear of death, ie. death with a sting, is now neutralised. The hope of glory takes its place (Rom. 5:1-2).

We have described the flesh in terms of humanity as it is affected by sin; and it is the flesh which causes man to preserve himself over and against God, and God's judgement on his sin. That is, *he tries to preserve himself from death.*

Romans 8:9-11 needs to be studied closely. In essence Paul is saying that Christians are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The dwelling of the Spirit within them is guarantee of their resurrection so that now they need not fear death. God, through His Spirit, will raise their mortal bodies, i.e. give them life at the resurrection. He concludes, 'So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—' and he undoubtedly was about to balance his sentence by adding, 'but you are debtors to the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit.' He adds, 'for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.'

The whole point here is that man is not under obligation to live as he did formerly, when participating in the old humanity, i.e. the 'old Adam' (cf. Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:9). This is reinforced by Colossians 2:11-15 where, in essence, Paul tells us that our death with Christ caused a circumcision of the flesh. In Christ's death it was circumcised, and all this had much to do with the forgiveness of our trespasses. The total sum is that the flesh has no legal hold because man has no guilt. This, too, approximates to Galatians 5:24: 'And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.' It is not that man crucified his flesh at Calvary, but that Christ did. Christ 'destroyed' it in the sense that we explain the word above. Man then is freed from death, and so from the flesh.

#### 4. The Idols

Paul gives us the origin of idolatry in Romans 1:18-24. He shows that man, when he could know God, rejected the knowledge of God, and so brought darkness into his person. Thinking themselves wise, they 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.' We have already seen that man is func-

tionally structured so that he must idolise something, must worship and serve some lord or another. He is not freestanding in creation, because 'the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own footsteps' (Jer. 10:23).

When guilt is destroyed, man is free, free now to worship God, and to find his true fullness in pure worship and service. As we will see, the Cross not only makes a change in man's standing before God by accounting him guiltless, but it makes an interior change in him. Essentially he remains as created, but subjectively his whole mind has been so changed that the idols look inane, they have lost their attraction and their tyrannous hold. Sheer love for God draws man to Him.

#### A CONCLUSION ABOUT LIBERATION BY GRACE

We see the principle, then, which will now aid us to live a holy life commensurate with the sanctification or consecration that God has bestowed upon us by His elective grace, namely that because our guilt (i.e. both its penalty and impurity) has been erased, therefore the enemies have lost their power and hold over us. How that works out in practice we must now discuss, but first let us see the sheer wonder of it all—God becoming incarnate to so deliver us that we can 'serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.'

***MAN LIVING IN HOLINESS BECAUSE DELIVERED  
FROM EVIL***

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**THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUAL OBEDIENCE**

Whatever the theology of liberation from sin and evil may be, and however true also the teaching that the Cross has delivered us from evil, the problem we face daily—even moment by moment—is our seeming inability to live holy lives. We ask questions about it. What is practical obedience? Are we delivered from law only to then have to obey law? How is it that Satan, being defeated, still seems very powerful? Why, when sin's power is broken, do we still go on sinning?

Christian history has been filled with these questions, in apostolic times and from them until now. We do need answers to our questions, or we need to know these matters so thoroughly that questions will not need to come. In any case, we must face the problem of how a person of faith is delivered from the power of evil yet goes on sinning. It is a problem, because it seems to deny the possibility of holiness.

**WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION, AND  
HOW DOES IT AFFECT US?**

In the New Testament, justification is that act of God by which He accounts to be righteous those who are sinners,

but who have believed in Christ and his propitiatory death as God's way of declaring a man righteous. In effect, it means that an unrighteous person is really declared to be a righteous person when he believes in the atoning death of Christ. The belief does nothing instrumentally to make this so, but it does receive what God has made to be so, ie. the justification. Let us widen the subject in order to understand how justification comes about, and how it proves to be valid.

**THE BASIS AND NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION**

Self-justification is widely known. It is both an ancient and modern phenomenon. Adam tried to justify his failure by saying it was the woman who caused him to sin. Saul the king of Israel blamed the people for not destroying the cattle of the Amalekites.

'He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord' (Prov. 17:15). There are those 'who justify the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of justice' (Isa. 5:23). Jesus said, 'wisdom is justified by her children' (Matt. 11:19). Of the lawyer who questioned Jesus, it was written, 'But he, desiring to justify himself...' (Luke 10:29). These statements show us that self-justification, ie. 'total acquittal from all charge of sin, crime or failure' is a well-known device in human experience. In a law court it simply means 'acquittal from the charge (ie. the accusation) of guilt.' A justified person is freed from all judgement.

The issue which Paul tackles in the Letter to the Romans extends virtually from Romans 1:16 to the end of chapter 5. He is seeking to show how God can be said to be just when He justifies the sinner' always keeping in mind that this particular sinner is one who has recognised his sinfulness and

the atonement God has provided for him in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must proceed then to see what it is Christ has done which justifies the sinner.

What Christ has done is that on the Cross he bore the sin and guilt which pertained to the sinner. We have already shown under the subjects of law, conscience, and wrath of God, that God's wrath is upon the sinner, and upon his sin. God being 'of purer eyes than to behold evil,' must judge and punish it where He sees it. The term 'propitiation' carries with it, in good theological thought, the idea of averting the wrath from the sinner by God's bearing of that wrath through His Son, Jesus Christ. The law is unchanging in its determination to vent all of the curse upon the sinner' ie. 'For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them"' (Gal. 3:10). The curse is the wrath of God felt in the conscience of the sinner (Psa. 7:11, Rom. 1:18), and this wrath pertains to the law.

Law' of itself (as we must keep understanding)' is not harsh' ruthless and condemnatory. Where man is in obedience to God' the law is a very beautiful and richly functional entity. It has often been pointed out that it is the very outshining of God's nature. However' to the unjustified man who is laden with his guilt' the law is most threatening. Paul said, 'I through law died to the law'' meaning that only when the law kills the sinner is he dead to it; but then he is dead! What a price to pay! Justification is total acquittal from the accusation and curse of the law. Paul says'

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written' 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree'—that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:13- 14, cf. 4:4-5).

## THE FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION

We will never understand the way of living in holiness unless we understand justification. Justification settles once for all our situation before God. The condemnation of the law has gone forever. The question of guilt pertaining to ultimate judgement is also finished. 'Where sin abounded' grace did much more abound.' Grace was not equal with sin' or slightly more prolific. Grace was—and is—of such abundant proportions that sin looks fiddling and trifling before it. Let him who would be holy never cease to understand this. The passage of I John 4:7-19 makes this whole matter clear. There we are told to love because this is the response we must have to God for His provision of propitiation. The propitiatory love casts out all fear, for fear relates to punishment, ie. judgement, and he who fears is not perfected in love. This means that what happened at the Cross has fixed the matter of judgement for ever. In fact John says that as Christ is innocent in relation to judgement' so are we and now in *this world'* ie. in this life!

Romans 3:24 and 5:17 speak of *the gift of grace'* thus:

They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Reading these thoughtfully we are convinced of the totality of grace' and therefore the totality of God's love. Now we are armed against the accusation of all evil elements. In the words of Horatius Bonar's hymn, we can say:

When Satan tempts me to despair,  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upwards I look and see him there  
Who made an end to all my sin.

The fruits of justification are assurance of acceptance by God, the end of our guilt and the opening of a new life in which accusation of guilt is always answered by the Cross and Resurrection, for '[he] was put to death for our offences and raised again for our justification'' Failure will come repeatedly in the Christian life, especially when we concentrate on doing good and desisting from evil. We will find ourselves wondering whether we can still be accepted by God, and be called saints, ie. 'the holy ones.' Well, we can, for nothing changes. This caused Luther to make his famous statement, 'Sin bravely.' He was by no means recommending sinning, but he wanted Christians who sinned to know that grace was not merely equal to sin, but so great that our failure makes no difference with God. Of course we do not want to sin, but in sinning we must not be cowed by accusation. We must continue to believe that this does not cancel God's justification of us.

We do not, now, work in order to *be justified*. By nature of the case that is impossible, but we do work because we *have been justified*. If we understand this then we can see that sanctification and justification each has its distinctive nature, but that the two are inextricably bound together.

### JUSTIFICATION A BARRIER AGAINST SINNING

Fierce debates have been waged down the years about the subject of justification. Paul was accused of using grace to encourage sin. To the contrary: Paul saw holiness as impossible apart from the grace of justification. We will look at this in our next chapter. We do not understand the redeemed human spirit unless we see that sin is abhorrent to it. A redeemed person would be unable to cope with his failure apart from justification. His conscience would know intolerable grief if it were not shored up by the comfort of 'There

is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1). It is because this pardon from guilt has come to him that he wishes to live in holiness. In this way justification sets him against sinning. This brings us to the truths expounded in the New Testament regarding experimental, ie. practical holiness. The battle for holiness is what occupies us daily, and will do so to the end of our lives.

***THE FOUNDATION AND WAY  
OF PRACTICAL HOLINESS (1)***

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The best way to discover the foundation and way of holiness is to see the basis for both justification and sanctification in the Epistle to the Romans. Strictly speaking we need to read the entire letter and digest it, but that is a mammoth task for our little book. What can be most helpful is to take the chapters 5 to 8 and do a précis of them. As the reader, you ought to have undertaken this study at some time or other, and if not then do a detailed examination of the four chapters. We proceed now to attempt a digest or summary of the passages.

**ROMANS FIVE**

The previous four chapters have been given over entirely to justification. Commencing with God's wrath in 1:18, Paul sets out to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners and therefore under the wrath of God. Paul then shows that God's plan from the beginning was the coming of Christ to be the propitiation for the sins of the world. This propitiation was effected by God in the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul shows that it was all of grace, and in no way of the working of man.

In chapter 5, he speaks first of the fruits of justification, namely 'access to this *grace* in which we stand, and rejoice in *hope* of sharing *the glory* of God.' The italicised words show us how magnificent is the theme of justification. In verses 5-11, Paul shows the nature of God's love which has been poured into our hearts. As fallen human beings we were utterly helpless (weak); not good or righteous but thoroughly sinful; not godly but ungodly; not lovers of God but His enemies; and while we were in this state, Christ died for the ungodly and reconciled us to God through the atonement, so that now we rejoice in Him.

The next section—verses 12 to 21—stresses the magnificent nature of justification. This justification is ours as a gift, liberating us from the tyranny of sin and death. It is really a vivid contrast with the man, Adam, who had all humanity in his loins and disobeyed God. When he disobeyed, then we—the entire human race—disobeyed in him. On the other hand, Christ was 'that one man Christ Jesus.' Later, in I Corinthians 15:45-50, Paul speaks of the 'last Adam.' This 'last Adam' has —so to speak—the elect people of God in his spiritual loins. Just as all humanity is a *solidary* body in Adam, so the elect of God are a *solidary* body in Christ. The disobedience of Adam is one for all his race, and the obedience of Christ is one for all his people. The radical and dynamic nature of this truth is beyond computation. Hence the passage is marvellously triumphant and joyful. Adam's sin brings sin and death. These two monstrous creatures fasten on the body of mankind. If we paraphrase and fill out verse 12, it would go something like this:

Sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and the result of that sin was that sin was now permanently seated in man, and brought as its consequence the reign of death over all mankind: *one sinned and so all sinned, and thus death*

became a part of their experience. However, the other man, Christ, rendered his mighty act of obedience and that act was now accounted to all who were (would one day be) in Christ. His obedience caused life to become the gift and experience of all, To sum up, ‘in Adam all sinned’ but ‘in Christ all obeyed.’

This is most significant for the human race. It can get out of Adam and come into Christ’ which means it can get out of sin and its clutches and get into Christ and his power. Paul calls this ‘grace.’ The measure of grace does not just meet and overcome the measure of sin. Christ does not just neatly meet sin and defeat it. Sin abounds, ie. it is vast and dreadful, but grace ‘much more abounds’ ie. it is an endless ocean, quantitatively, against the trifling, piffling, muddy trickle of sin. This shows the dynamic nature of justification, and it can be summed up beautifully in verse 17:

If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned though that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

### ROMANS SIX

Commentators differ in their approach to this chapter. Some see it as the continuation of Paul’s thesis on justification, and others as the introduction of the theme of sanctification. It surely must be both. Paul does not set out systematic theology as such’ but rather the truth as it is important for Christian living. His argument is something like the following:

Knowing that grace is quantitatively and qualitatively so abundant’ shall we give grace its opportunity by continuing to sin?

How ridiculous. No, we must understand that we are in the last Adam, because baptism brings union with him. By that union we became one with him in his death: we died with him. We not only died and were buried with him, but we also rose with him.

Now death is the penalty for sin, and when we died in him the penalty was fully exacted of us and for us. That means we are ‘justified from sin,’ ie. acquitted from it. Our old humanity was corporately crucified with him, and so the whole mass of sin was dealt with in God’s way on the Cross, the result of which is that we are liberated from sin’s hold, and our bodies do not have to sin.

We must understand that he died—once for all. He rose again—once for all. So we must reckon on the fact that in him we died to sin, *once for all*, and we rose *once for all* to live for God. Because this has happened, we must not allow sin to reign in our bodies as hitherto it has reigned. We are under no obligation to use our faculties for sin: indeed, our obligation is to yield ourselves wholly to God. That is, we must recognise that what we are and have belong to God through Christ’s death and our union with him, via baptism. Therefore our faculties are now the vehicles and instruments of righteousness and not of sin.

The core truth of all this is that the power of sin lies in the guilt of sin. Since, in Christ, the law has been fulfilled, we are not under the law for justification. We have no ‘law-guilt,’ hence sin has lost its power. We must not then let it have any power over us.

This conclusion is supported by other Pauline Scriptures, especially I Corinthians 15:55-56, ‘ “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.’ Death’s sting is sin, for we dread judgement. Sin’s power is by the law, for through the law dynamic guilt attaches to us. The Cross and Resurrection have cleared away the guilt and thus also the power of sin and death!

Paul now proceeds to show the nature of holiness through union with Christ. He says:

When I tell you that we are not under law, does that mean. 'Ah! Anything goes!?' In no way! The practical fact is that—whatever your theology of Christ and his death may be—if, in practice, you yield yourself to anyone (be he good or bad), you are then in a state of slavery. In one case it will be disobedience which brings death, and in the other it will be obedience which brings life. We are simply talking about the surrender of your will to one or another. Thus freedom from law does not mean freedom to do what you wish. What you decide will settle what will happen.

I know that whereas once you yielded yourselves to sin, and its impurity, and so were its slaves, now something has happened whereby you have yielded yourself to the truth, and have become the slaves of Christ. Those who are the slaves of sin die the death of sin, but those who become the slaves of Christ are in the business of righteousness which has in view only sanctification.

So then, sanctification is a matter of decision and the action of obedience. Obedience to sin brings death, but obedience to God brings holiness and its beautiful outcome, eternal life. Sin can only give death as its wages, but grace exacts no wages. It gives us eternal life as a gift.

All of this of course is in Christ Jesus. In union with him. we have all that we have spoken about above.

We may then summarise Romans 6 as follows: the defeat of sin as a reigning power in us is from the destruction of guilt, and the outcome of this is that we become obedient to God, the effects of which are holiness of life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

***THE FOUNDATION AND WAY OF PRACTICAL HOLINESS (2)***

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**ROMANS SEVEN**

This chapter has occasioned more debate than any other in the Roman epistle' especially the section of verses 13-25. We need not enter into the whole debate' for such would be a difficult task at this point. Even so, we must seek to understand the thrust of the chapter.

In verses 1 to 7' Paul is showing that a man is under the law all his life. The only escape from such law is to die. An illustration is seen in marriage' ie. that a woman cannot be freed from the law of her marriage unless her husband dies. Paul is ignoring the matter of divorce at this point. A woman's only escape from the law of marriage lies in the death of her husband. Paul also knew that law itself never dies. The solution is for the woman to die and be freed from the tyranny of the law of her husband. In fact what happens is that Christ died in respect of the law' and since the woman is in 'the body of Christ'' as we saw in Romans 6, then she has died to the law (of her husband) and is now freed from that law.

Paul does not envisage freedom from law as the opportunity for 'anything goes.' In verse 6 he says we go on serving, but in a new context, and not from legal pressure but

through the inspiration of the Spirit. We are now in life, and not under a merciless tyranny. We serve in freedom, for 'where the Spirit of the Lord is' there is liberty' (II Cor. 3:17).

Because many of his readers have a high regard for law' they may think that Paul is downgrading the law. This is not the case. Paul is thinking particularly of Jews who groaned under the *condemnation* of law. It was the condemnation which held them captive so that they could enjoy neither law nor God.

Jewish readers would have been scandalised by Paul's seemingly cavalier treatment of the law. In verses 7-13, Paul reassures them he is not attacking law. For him the law is 'holy,' 'just' 'spiritual' and 'good.' The law in Romans 8:2 is 'the law of sin and death' ie. the law which we oppose and break, so that it is for us 'the law of sin.' The outcome of breaking the law by sinning is death. Therefore it is the 'law of death' but intrinsically it is not the law of sin and death. So in verses 7-13 it is not the law which makes sin, but sin in fact uses the law as a lever to incite sin in human beings. Sin takes advantage of the law, and levers man into sin. When a person is told, 'Thou shalt not covet,' he responds to the contrary. The law in this sense evokes sin. Yet the commandments are meant for life, not death. So we must conclude that the law causes neither sin nor death, but sin cunningly uses it to evoke both.

Paul's insight in the thirteenth verse is quite brilliant: 'Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good' in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.' That is' sin oversteps itself and is exposed for what it is. Paul's conclusion' then, is that 'the commandment is holy and just and good.' Having concluded this, he then turns to himself and his analysis of his *own actions in regard to sin and law*.

### Paul's Actions in Regard to Sin and Law

We must pause in the midst of this précis of Romans 7 to see that Paul is simply sharing what happens to him when it comes to the matter of *obeying the law*. Some see the passage as Paul prior to conversion, still struggling with law. Some see it as representative of all men in their struggle with law. A few see it as Paul having some 'desert experience,' ie. he has been trying to work things through. Some see it even as Paul in a defeated and possibly backslidden state. So far as I understand it, Paul is describing what happens to him whenever *in the face of law* he seeks to be obedient. Let us list some of the facts:

1. The law of itself is spiritual: Paul is carnal and sold under sin.
2. Paul desires to do good and desist from evil.
3. Every time (without exception) he is unable (a) to do good; (b) to desist from evil.
4. Paul delights in the law in his inner being. He thus *wills* to do good, but finds he has no innate power to accomplish this.
5. Paul, of himself, has nothing good within himself, ie. *within his flesh*, hence his desire to do good is baffled by sin which is stronger than he is.
6. He finds an inflexible principle within himself. It is (a) that whenever he plans to do good, evil is immediately and dynamically present to prevent him, (b) this never-failing presence of sin always overcomes his good *intention* and endeavour to do good. It makes him captive to the law of sin within him.
7. Paul insists that since he wishes to do good and not evil, yet does not do the good, but does the evil, then it must be sin that overcomes him and is more powerful than he.
8. Paul seeks to be taken out of the range and action of this evil principle operating within him. He is glad that God will do it through Christ, but that is in the future, not now.

9. Paul's summary is that (a) he serves God with the law of his mind, ie. his right intention, but (b) in his flesh he—perforce —serves the law of sin.

What do we conclude from these details? We must see that Paul is not talking as he does in Romans 6 of being delivered from the power of sin by grace so that he overcome sin by grace, but of his personal problems when, in *face of obedience to the law*, he seeks to *obey the law*. He discovers that within him are two related elements' (a) sin, and (b) the flesh. If Paul's analysis is correct then even believing man with his new life does not *innately* possess goodness' as such. Hence he cannot *of himself* overcome evil and do good. Such an analysis ought to be most liberating' for it is giving us an anthropological truth, namely that man in himself is weak and that both sin and flesh are stronger than he is.<sup>5</sup>

What we must keep constantly in mind is that in Romans 6, Paul is speaking of the clearance of guilt, and the loss of sin's power through that event. In Romans 7, he is analysing the man who seeks to obey the law, but is unsuccessful' ie. he obeys it in *intention*' but cannot obey it in *action*. In Romans 8' he is speaking of man living in' and depending upon' the Spirit' in which case man can now 'put to death the deeds of the body,' ie. he can live in a state in which sin and flesh are defeated when obedience through the Spirit is effected. We must see these three situations as different, yet,

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<sup>5</sup> What then do we make of Romans 7:14-25? Decisions on this section have proved quite painful, for what we decide must in some way affect the way we see ourselves and so the way we act. Is this conflict that Paul shares that of a regenerated person? Surely it must be, since he delights in the law of God, wishes only to do good, and desires wholly to desist from evil. It is evident that he *of himself* is weaker than sin and the flesh: he is forced by them to do what they wish. He seems to differentiate between two elements (a) his own mind or heart which delights in good and desires to do it, and (b) two elements which are joined together, but which *reside in him*, ie. sin and flesh. What is puzzling is that he then speaks of 'my mind,' and 'my flesh.' Obviously these two are completely antithetic, one to the other. The question

when all together, just the one. Hence if we look at the believer as in only Romans 6, or only Romans 7, or only Romans 8, then we will get the whole matter quite out of focus.

Quite naturally then, we must proceed to Romans 8.

(footnote cont.)

we now face is, 'Paul, as a new creation, has sin and the flesh operating in him, but are these two in any sense part of Paul himself?' Paul would deny that the sin that dwells in him is part of himself. Rather, it is a power within him *which is not him*. Would he deny that flesh is part of him? He would not deny that the flesh works in him, and *in some sense* is linked with him. Would he, however, think of it as intrinsically a part of his new being? What of the *new heart*, and the *new spirit* and the *purged conscience*, and *inmost self* or *inner being*? It is the same Paul who speaks of 'love which issues from a *pure heart* and a *good conscience* and *sincere faith*.' We will discuss this matter at greater length in the text of the book, but here we can at least raise the question which needs to be answered: are sin and flesh part of the *new creation*, or are they simply parasitic upon him, and doomed under the eschatological judgement to be severed from man and destroyed for ever? For practical purposes Paul sees sin and flesh as working quite dynamically within him. 'My flesh' (RSV) seems to suggest that at least Paul takes responsibility for its working, as part of himself. The Greek text, however, does not have the possessive pronoun, but simply speaks of *the flesh*. When we examine Romans 8:13, we might find that we can distinguish between the body as flesh, and the flesh as a general principle, which, like sin, is an entity and force working upon and in humanity. What we need to keep in mind is that we are living in the penultimate situation, and not the ultimate. Much of what is said about the defeat of sin and flesh is eschatological in its thrust. To speak of man as though he were in the ultimate may be the language of hope rather than purely indicative of the present.

## ***THE FOUNDATION AND WAY OF PRACTICAL HOLINESS (3)***

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### ROMANS EIGHT

When we come to Romans 8 we are confronted with justification in the very first verse, since ‘condemnation’ is opposite to ‘justification.’ Paul tells us—no matter what he has said about law in chapter 7—that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, the reason being that ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set [us] free from the law of sin and death.’ If we understand ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ to be the Gospel of the grace of God, then we will see the need for the Spirit to be present to make the Gospel effective. ‘The law of sin and death’ is the law Paul has been speaking about before, but which at this point is the law which incites the sinner and then pronounces his death as penal judgement for sinning. If this seems complicated we must nevertheless see that we are not to be dismayed by the law, because by Gospel and Spirit we have been set free from its condemnatory elements. It has done this in order that ‘the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.’

What does Paul mean in verses 3 and 4? Does he mean that in the work of the atonement ‘the just requirement of

the law’ was fulfilled’ ie. that ‘Christ is [was] the end of the law’ that every one who has faith may be justified’ (Rom. 10:4)? Or does he mean that having ‘condemned sin in the flesh [Christ’s flesh], the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us’ by our practical outworking of that law? To put it another way, did Christ fulfil the just requirement of the law by bearing our condemnation (which came from the law)’ or did he bear condemnation so that now we might live in accordance with the demand for righteous living which the law puts forth?

The latter appears to be the correct understanding. Whilst he did fulfil the just (legal) requirement of the law on the Cross for us’ yet the practice of the just requirement is really *the way of holy living*. This raises the issue known in Reformed theology as ‘the third use of the law.’

A problem has always existed in Reformed theology. Luther spoke of the three uses of the law, namely:

- (a) to maintain external order in the community of humanity in general;
- (b) to bring sinners to see their sin’ and 50 be convicted of their guilt’ and
- (c) to be the pattern and direction for the life of believers.

Not all theologians agree that there are three uses of the law. The major cause of trouble was (and is) the third use of law. Since Paul seems to say that we have been freed from law’ why should we yet obey it? People who have no time for the third use of the law see Romans 7:14-25 as referring to the person not yet justified. Others object to the third use of the law’ saying that we have been brought into a new form of legalism. Those who hold to the third use of the law say it is there for direction in true and holy living.

There seems to be no solution to the problem whilst we insist on the term ‘third use of the law’ for the first two also may be wrong. Certainly if the third use becomes a new

legalism' then it is wrong. On the other hand' the antinomians—those against a post-conversion use of law—have no place whatever for law. They see the dangers of incipient legalism, and the loss of their freedom. In fact there are three groups, (a) the nomists who see conversion as saving but insist that it is *only with a view to* law-keeping, without which nothing can be authentic, (b) the antinomians, of whom we have just spoken above' and (c) the non-nomist non-antinomians. This last group believe they are released from the condemnation of the law in order to obey from the heart, by the Spirit, that inwardly written law' seeing it is the law of the Father for His children' by which they can live a genuinely holy life. Paul speaks of these as those 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' It is certain that the need to obey law will always carry with it the possibility of legalism, whilst antinomians will always carry the danger of libertinism, and this is lawlessness.

#### Romans 8:5-12

In this section Paul is saying that there are two ways of living, (a) by the flesh, and (b) by the Spirit. He is not saying that one person can live two ways of life, ie. in the Spirit and in the flesh. 'In the Spirit' is a statement for being redeemed, justified, and living in the Spirit, and 'in the flesh' is a term for not being redeemed, nor justified, nor living in the Spirit. In fact he shows that 'the flesh' is always lawless always incorrigible. It is hostile to God's law and will have none of it in any way whatever.

Paul says that the 'mindset' of the Spirit is always for life' ie. life-producing, whereas the 'mindset' of the flesh always produces death. He says that if the Spirit does not indwell a person, then that person is not in Christ. In verses 10-11, Paul is saying, 'If Christ is in you, then, whilst your bodies —because of sin—are doomed to physical death, yet the

Holy Spirit is life-giving because of justification. This Spirit—the life-giving One, is your assurance of resurrection because he is in you, and will take you through to resurrection. He will bring your body to resurrection.'

When Paul goes on to verse 12, he is saying that because the Spirit is in us and resurrection to life is assured, therefore we are not legally (or in any other way) indebted to the flesh. Rather, he is saying, we are obligated to live according to the Spirit.

#### Romans 8:13

Having established the background of this verse, we now single it out to see its basic meaning, especially in the light of Romans 7:6. We are to put to death the deeds ('doings,' 'acts') of the body' so that we will live. Most commentators take the statement 'deeds of the body' in a pejorative sense, ie. in a depreciatory way. Doubtless Paul means that these deeds if not put to death will be harmful. However, he may mean that 'putting to death' is a work of the person and the Spirit to prevent a normal deed of the body from becoming a wrong deed. For example, eating and drinking are normal deeds of the body. Gluttony is not, so it requires the will to deny the extension of the normal deed of the body, for that extension would be gluttony and so surrender to 'the flesh.'

If this is what the verse means then it is indeed a significant one. It means that all endeavours to extend normal body deeds into fleshly acts can be prevented by the will of the believer and the operation of the Spirit, the same Spirit who has already set us free from the law of sin and death.

In Colossians 3:5, Paul says, 'Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire' and covetousness' which is idolatry,' and this parallels Romans 8:13. All elements which would distort the natural and proper operations of the body must be denied. That is'

through the Spirit we deny the flesh' and this comports with Galatians 5:16-26, a passage we will later examine.

**Romans 8:14-17**

Paul now introduces us to the heart of true obedience. It is 'being sons' and 'being led by the Spirit.' We know that in all things Jesus' Sonship was made known to him in his humanity, by the Spirit, for the Spirit had come upon him at the baptism and God had said, 'This is my beloved Son' in whom I am well pleased.' Luke 10:21 shows him rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and crying, 'I thank you, Father. . . We are told that his Sonship was fulfilled in his being led by the Spirit' eg. into the wilderness to be tested by the devil

Now we see that 'obedience from the heart' (cf. Rom. 6:17) only obtains when we are led by the Spirit' and such are 'sons of God.' Now we are introduced to the idea of a Father-Son obedience. Paul then says that we have received the Spirit of sonship. If we link this passage with Galatians 4:4-6, we arrive at these conclusions:

- (a) the Father has sent the Spirit of His Son into our heart crying 'Abba! Father!'
- (b) because we are sons and the Spirit has come' we also cry 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit then testifies along with us that we are the children of God.

The obedience that concerned us when speaking of the law is thus a Spirit-given' Spirit-empowered' filial motivated obedience, ie. it is 'from the heart'' and in no sense legalistic.

**Romans 8:18-39**

Because we will need to consider again some of this final section' we will make our summary of it brief. Paul shows that the sons will receive God's true inheritance, ie. the inheritance or patrimony that the Father gives to His children.

We will not receive it until the creation is wholly renewed, and that will be when the sons of God will be revealed in their maturity of glory. Meanwhile there is much convulsive suffering in the universe.

In the midst of this suffering we must live in hope by the Spirit or we will be hopelessly confused. In verses 26-34 Paul shows us that the Spirit, the Father and the Son are all working for us. We live in a world where, because of our innate weakness, we do not even know how to pray. The *Spirit intercedes for us within us*. This intercession is important, for the Father hears and provides for the need. The Father Himself answers all the accusations against His children. He has planned the goal of glory for His children; then who dares condemn them? The Father Himself justifies; indeed He has done before even time began. Not only does the Father justify, but the Son has died for us, and having risen now intercedes for us at the right hand of God. He works in our cause, not to get the Father to accept us, for He has long ago done that, but with the Son and the Spirit intervening for us, the whole Godhead makes sure we are never separated from the love of God.

**A Conclusion to the Studies on Romans Chapters 5 to 8**

In chapter I we were under wrath. By chapter 3 we had been justified by His grace as a gift. In chapter 4 forgiveness and justification were shown to be wholly free and dynamic in their impetus to faith. In chapter 5 the fruits of justification are for us who have seen His love in the atonement; how rich these are is seen in the fact that Christ's total obedience is accounted to us, grace covering all our sins, and much more.

In chapter 6 the basis for sanctification is not only set, but its modes disclosed to us. Sin has no right to make us its slaves because grace has broken the power of sin, ie. the

guilt of the law. Now we are submitted to God 'from the heart.' In chapter 7 our freedom from the bondage of law is shown afresh, and then our weakness under sin and the flesh is shown in the face of our desire to obey the law. We, of ourselves, cannot succeed. That is why we must live in the Spirit, and have no dealings whatever with the flesh. It is by the Spirit that we have been set free from the law of sin and death. The Gospel has freed us. We do not belong to the flesh. Our fear of death is banished by the life-giving Spirit who will raise us from the dead. Thus now we co-operate with the Spirit to see that the deeds of the body remain normal and do not become fleshly. This desire for, and practice of, obedience is born of our sonship of the Father. By the Spirit we know Him as Father.

Our confidence is strengthened in a world of convulsive suffering (from which we are not excepted) by the intercession of the Spirit within us, the sovereign work of God for us, and the intercession of the Son from his place of authority—at the right hand of God. This surely is the great basis, foundation, and setting for the life of holiness of those who love Him, and desire to obey Him from the heart.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

***THE LAW AND HOLINESS:  
HOLINESS AND THE LAW***

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**THE LAW AND THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS**

It has generally been agreed that the Letter to the Romans has as its basic subject 'the righteousness of God.' It is important to know this' since righteousness is primarily adherence to the law of God. Chapters 1 to 5 are concerned with our awakening and coming to the righteousness of God' which justifies the ungodly (ie. the sinner) who has faith. Chapters 6 to 8 are concerned with that active obedience which springs from justification and which is allied with it. In this' the law is still significant and kept in mind. Chapters 9 to 11 have been called 'God's righteousness in the world and history,' ie. the justice with which God approaches Israel and the nations, and works out His will, ie. His righteous will. Chapters 12 to 16 have been called 'the righteousness of the people of God,' ie. the way in which the people of God conducts itself in practice.

**THE LAW IN ROMANS**

We need not go into fine detail with this part of our study. We simply observe that Paul has the idea of the law in the

front of his mind. So' for that matter, do many of his readers' and Paul is talking to them' teaching them about the law' and yet insisting that men are justified by grace, and live out righteousness by means of the same grace.

#### Chapters 1-4

Paul first establishes the fact that the lawlessness of mankind is in the face of law. The Jews have their own (Mosaic) law: the Gentiles have theirs written on their hearts (2:1-16). The Jews may pride themselves on adherence to law' but when all is said and seen, Jews offend the same laws much after the manner of the Gentiles (2:17-24). The test of true law-obedience is not the fact of fleshly circumcision but circumcision of the heart. The criterion for both Jew and Gentile is spiritual circumcision: only this is true law-obedience.

In Romans 3:19- 20, Paul states:

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law' 50 that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law. since through the law come' knowledge of sin.

He is saying (a) man's guilt is made plain by his infringement of the law, and (b) the law brings the knowledge of sin. This could mean that it is only when we hear 'Thou shalt not covet' that we know that sin is covetousness, or that it is only when law comes to us that sin has its power, and thus we come to know its nature. This latter idea is set out brilliantly in Romans 7:7-13. In Romans 3:21-31, Paul proceeds to speak of God's justifying righteousness through propitiation, by which the sinner is justified from the condemnation of the law, that law-condemnation having been borne by Christ. This passage is specially important, for it shows (a) that propitiation is effected in the light of the law and its requirements, and (b) that such *propitiation, far*

*from doing away with the law, does, in fact, establish it.*

Chapter 4 is occupied with showing that grace was prior to Jewish (Mosaic) law in time, by virtue of God's covenantal promises to Abraham, so that justification by faith was also prior to law. Thus justification is never dependent upon law. Indeed it is the gift of grace. If law is to be the basis of justification, then faith (as the justifying principle) is null, and the *promise* void. As for the law, 'it brings wrath.' Where 'there is no law there is no transgression' (4:13-14). This slightly complex idea has to be understood, and it must be seen that in no way is law denigrated. It is simply shown not to be the means of justification.

#### Chapters 5-8

We now come to see that in the following four chapters Paul is still very much occupied with the law. It may be that he is trying to satisfy the minds of scrupulous Jews, but it is more probable that he is protecting the nature of law. On the one hand he wants us to see it is not by law that we are justified, and on the other hand that law remains intact as a *principle* of God, and is not abrogated by the coming and power of grace. To see this is a demanding exercise.

*Chapter Five.* Paul has already pointed out that justification from guilt frees a person from the condemnation of law. He now shows how the law brings condemnation. In verse 13, he says, 'sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law,' and in verse 21, '50 that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' These add up to the thought that law is dynamic to bring in both guilt and the (heightened) action of sin. In the latter case, grace proves more dynamic than sin' but sin has its power by reason of the law. Paul does not see

this as the essential nature of the law, but what happens by reason of the law.

*Chapter Six.* Here the law rates little mention directly, but it is nevertheless strongly present in Paul's thinking. In verse 7, the death of man fulfils the law's penalty and so justifies him from sin: this death takes place in Christ's death. However, what is most important as a statement and a principle is verse 14: 'For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.' Paul is saying the believer is *not under law*. What does he mean? Note that there is no place where a human being can be where he is not under either law or grace. He is either under the principle of law or the principle of grace. Grace, in one sense, is his new law. Verse 15 poses the question, 'What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?' The answer is powerful: 'By no means!'

Not to be under law means that 'by grace' sin can be defeated, i.e. true obedience can be rendered. Rendered to whom? Rendered to what? The answer is 'To God.' What then does this yielding produce? It results in yielding 'your members to righteousness for sanctification' (verse 19). Righteousness is not a viable fact and factor apart from law. Law must still be in the picture' though not of course as a means of justification.

Thus, with the statement, 'You are not under law' but under grace'' Paul is saying 'Law could never justify you from sin' or deliver you from its power. But grace can. Therefore do not identify with law in your pursuit of (forensic) justification' and its consequent liberation from sin's power which received its inner dynamic from guilt.' As we said previously, sin has its power by reason of guilt. Because guilt has been taken by Christ, the believer is delivered I from the (guilt) power of sin.

*Chapter Seven.* We have already studied this chapter, but

now we look at it primarily with a view to understanding the place of law. Why does Paul say immediately that as long as a man lives he is under the law? Surely it is because man is never free from all the functions of law. In Christ he is free from the condemnation of law, but not law in all its aspects. In verses 1- 6, he speaks of the wife who desires to escape 'the law of the husband.' She can do this by dying; but if she were no longer alive to enjoy her freedom, then what use would that be to her? Well, in Christ' she does die; but she also becomes alive. She dies by his death 'to bear fruit unto God.' Escaping the condemnation of law she now is 'discharged from law' dead to that which held her captive so that *she serves* not under the old written code [the law written and bringing condemnation] but in *the new life of the Spirit*' (verse 6). What then does the new believer serve? Doubtless she serves the law, but serves 'in the newness of the Spirit.'

In **verses 7-13**, Paul is obviously showing how, for those under 'the old written code,' obedience to law was subverted by the action of sin, which used the law to incite them to sinning. For sin deceived by means of the law (verse 11). Law thus became an instrument of death and not life. In verse 13, Paul makes a definitive statement: 'Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.' He means that sin, in using the law to incite to sin, overstepped the mark and exposed itself for what it was. Law aided man to see 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin.' Now sin was unmasked—and all because of law!

**Verses 13-25** have become famous not only for their content but also the debate which rages about them. Note that, in them, Paul is talking of a person who is *trying to obey* law. Whether he is a Christian or not, he is seeking to obey

law. He sees this as an essential requirement made of him. He realises, however, that obedience to the law is impossible where inbred sin has its place. He is forced to admit that 'I, of myself, serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I save the law of sin.' The point is that he is still seeking to serve the law. If we see him as unregenerate we find that he must seek to serve law. If regenerate, then the case is no different. *Law is what matters most of all.* Why should this be?

*Chapter Eight.* What is central to this chapter? The answer must be, 'Living in the Spirit.' True, but what is central to living in the Spirit? The answer is, 'Fulfilling the just requirements of the law' (verse 4). The man in the flesh 'is hostile to God' because the flesh '*does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot*' (verse 7). Obviously the person who 'has the mind of the Spirit' does obey the law of God. There can be no logical idea in the text apart from this one.

The first question arises, 'What is it to fulfil the just requirements of the law?' Some claim it is Christ's forensic satisfaction of the law, which he has already enacted on the Cross. The law's requirements mean death to the transgressor, but Christ has borne this death and (legally) justified (ie. freed) the accused sinner. This is no doubt true, but the passage seems to go beyond even that. It is typical of one who walks in the Spirit to fulfil the just requirements of the law *not in order to be justified*—since that has already happened—but because a person who walks according to the Spirit sees this as his new role.

It appears then, that to live in the Spirit is to obey the law. This is seen in verse 13, where the believer, by means of the Spirit, extirpates the (fleshly) deeds of the body. These deeds are against the law. Paul is then preserving the immutable nature of law and especially as it is exercised in what has been called 'the third use of the law.' Some Reformers saw

*the first use of the law* much as expounded in I Timothy 1:8- 11:

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomisers, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

In these terms, the law is there to tell the world that God makes certain demands of man, and under pain of penalty he must keep them. These—in some sense—act as a restraint, even if they also tend to provoke the sinner by their very nature of prohibition. Thus society is in some sense restrained from total anarchy.

The *second use of the law* is to bring sinners to guilt so that they will see the need of the Gospel, and the *third use of the law* is to act as a directory to the life of holiness. Certainly Paul is not saying anywhere in Romans chapters 1-8 that the law is dissolved by the action of redemptive grace.

Whilst none of us necessarily needs to see law in its alleged three uses, yet the principle of obedience to law by the believer needs to be examined. Romans 6:15-23 has certainly directed us to yielding our members 'to righteousness for sanctification' and we cannot understand righteousness as being other than active obedience to given law. The question of law then arises. Is there a law? Is it the Mosaic law? What in fact is the law which links with 'righteousness unto holiness'?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

***THE OBEDIENCE OF HOLINESS (1)***

What does Paul mean by saying, 'you are not under law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14), 'but now we are discharged from law' (Rom. 7:6), 'the written code [law] kills' but the Spirit gives life' (II Cor. 3:6), and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2)? The answer must be that the justified person is freed from the condemnation of the law, from the law as a (supposed) means of being justified, and from law-obedience as a means of obtaining, sustaining and maintaining justification.

This latter point is emphasised time and again in the letter to the Galatian church, by such statements as the following:

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse (3:10). By works of the law shall no one be justified (2:16).

If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose (2:21)

If a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness [justification] would indeed be by the law (3:21).

It is often thought that Paul was speaking to the Galatians in regard to Mosaic law and that alone. This point could be strongly sustained, since he mentions circumcision a lot in this letter. Doubtless he is primarily referring to the Mosaic law because the Judaizing Christians had come from Jerusalem to inveigle these Galatians into their Judaic-Christian

cult of nomism. He says, 'I testify to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law.' He means 'Mosaic law.' He says, 'You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law: you have fallen away from grace.' This law then is law-opposed-to-grace, but then that is an attitude and a principle *rather than the law itself*.

**THE LAW OF LOVE, OF CHRIST: THE LAW**

In this very letter in which he emphasises our freedom from law, Paul still gives high place to law. On the one hand he says, 'if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law' (5:18)' and on the other 'For the whole law is fulfilled in one word' "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" ' (5:14). Again in Romans 13:8-10 he says,

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence. 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

This should be sufficient to show that Paul believes the law is very much alive, and it is our duty to keep it. He has already said in Romans 8:4-8 that the man of the Spirit keeps the law, and the man of the flesh does not, will not, and cannot.

Paul also speaks of 'not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ' (I Cor. 9:21). He is saying that he is under law towards God and that means he is under the law of Christ. This term 'law of Christ' appears again in Galatians 6:2: 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' What, then, is the law of Christ? It may well be the command to love as seen in John 13:34, and repeated

in 15:12-13 (cf. I John 3:16). If so, then it comports with the Pauline statements we have just made on love being the fulfilling of the law. James seems to support this principle in his letter, in 1:22-25 and 2:8-13. Here the law is 'the royal law., ie. 'the law of the [in].' as also it is 'the perfect law the law of liberty.' This again comports with much which is said in Psalms 1, 19 and 119, where to seek God's precepts is to walk in freedom.

#### THE CONTINUING LAW OF GOD

When Paul says 'through the law comes knowledge of sin' he must mean also that 'through the law comes knowledge of God's righteousness.' This could be in two ways: (a) man could see God's righteousness against his own unrighteousness; and (b) just as sin is known in its activity through the law, so righteousness is known in its activity through the law. Even in the conflict outlined in Romans 7:14-25, the autobiographist says, 'I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' He is like the psalmist of whom it is said, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord.' The rapturous praises of the law by the writer of Psalm 119 are so rich as to lead us into a new appreciation of the law. Known to the Hebrews as 'the Torah,' law, for the most part, was 'instruction' and not merely legislative regulations.

Much debate ensues over the matter of 'creational law' 'natural law,' 'the law of God,' 'the law of commandments,' and the like. Jesus said that not one jot or tittle of the law would pass until all be fulfilled' and 'ever since' folk have contended about his meaning. Some have argued that his death did indeed fulfil the law' and so it has passed away. Others see 'law' and 'gospel' as functionally united, and certainly not in opposition each to the other. Law and grace need not be antitheses' but can be seen as complementary.

Some go so far as to say that Christ was 'the law made flesh,' and not only grace; others that 'law and grace' are of the one reality. In such statements there is much room for discussion and debate. To find the truth in it all, what is needed is to probe and penetrate to the reality of both law and grace. This cannot be done merely in an abstract way, for the issues of obeying law are not abstract.

When we say, 'the issues of obeying law are not abstract,' we mean that *conscience always relates to law*. When the blood of Christ 'purges the conscience from dead works,' the result always is 'to serve the living God.' How then does one serve without direction? What are the ways of God if they come not to us as law? When Abraham is said to have 'obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws' (Gen. 26:5), then what were these? Were they rooted as much in creation as in covenant? When God said that His people needed the cleansing of their hearts from filthinesses and idols, and the insertion of a new heart and a new spirit, he also said, 'I will . . . cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.' Were these then simply the repetition of Mosaic ordinances, or did they penetrate deeply to the moral realm—the heart of true law?

In fact, does not such a passage as this (Ezek. 36:25-28) parallel the passage of the covenant promise of Jeremiah 31:31- 34 where God says, 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'? In other words, the law is living within the heart. It is not seen as heavy legislation, burdensome legalistic demand, but as the new way of life. The writer of Psalm 119 says, 'Enlarge my heart and I will run the way of thy commandments.' Does he not mean that liberation from the condemnation of the law converts the heart to obedience to the same law, the law which is now 'sweeter also hen honey and drippings of the honeycomb' (Psa. 19:10)?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

***THE OBEDIENCE OF HOLINESS (2)*****CHRIST AND HIS COMMANDS**

Christ gave commands as well as commending the law and its precepts. The Sermon on the Mount takes us into the true nature of law, into its very heart. It first demands a right *attitude to truth* (the Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3-11), and then the faithful observance of that truth. When Jesus said, 'Thy word is truth,' he meant that it was immutable. The word of God is effective in itself' and when it comes to us as law it is not merely regulative: it is dynamic. That is to say' when it comes as law it comes as instruction' direction, enlightenment' sustenance' encouragement. 'The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to direct his own footsteps' (Jer. 10:23)' but then' 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' (Psa. 119:105). God's law in Psalm 119 is variously called 'thy statutes,' 'thy word,' 'thy commandments,' 'thy precepts,' 'thy testimonies,' 'thy ordinance'' 'thy promise'' 'thy judgements'' and 'thy truth.'

If this beautiful understanding obtains in the Old Testament' then surely no less in the New Testament. This is because the words that proceeded out of Christ's mouth were gracious even if spoken in judgement. Jesus said' 'You are my friends if you do what I command you' (John 15:14), and 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' (John 14:15). He said, 'He who has my commandments and

keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him . . . If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him' (John 14:21, 23). John later said, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his *commandments are not burdensome*' (I John 5:3)

When Christ gave the disciples direction to take the Gospel into all the world, he said, 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:20a). It is interesting that of this event Luke wrote, 'he had given commandments through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen' (Acts 1:2b).

**COMMANDS IN THE WITNESSING CHURCH**

The birth of the church at Pentecost brought the people of God to be the prophetic community. In Acts 2:17-18, Peter says that the prophecy of Joel, 'and [they] shall prophesy,' was now being fulfilled. The same idea of witness is found richly in the Revelation of John the Divine. The people of God 'bear witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (eg. Rev. 1:2, 9, 6:9, 12:11, 20:4). In 12:17, this same principle is spoken of as 'those who *keep the commandments of God* and bear testimony to Jesus.' Thus the faithful are spoken of as 'those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,' and in Revelation 22:14, some ancient authorities have, 'Blessed are those who do his commandments.'

There can be no doubt about it that obedience through joy, through fear and reverence and love, is what is required. If our exegesis of Romans 8:4 is correct, then all that we have been describing is 'the just requirement of the law,'

and needs to be obeyed. The psalmist's statement, 'I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts' (Psa. 119:45) is really telling us that obedience to the law is the true way of liberty.

#### THE SECURITY OF OBEDIENCE

Only those who have suffered in the anarchy of their own spirits can understand the security of law. Whilst human beings may be in danger of hiding out in legal precepts, they may face greater danger in their self-rule and self-law. To believe that God commands His people is a comforting thought: in His directions they are secure. If, however, awe of God is absent, then law becomes a tyranny. The proud, rebellious spirit of man is irked under law's intolerable load and yoke. When, however, a holy fear of God is present, then the humbled spirit rests in the joy of simple direction. Such is the one who works out his salvation 'with fear and trembling.' 'Fear and trembling' does not put an end to joy and serenity: it is the very secret of them.

Man finds his real self in his submission to God, his obedience to His laws, and in realising that this, anyway, is the true way of life. Law's intention is towards life and not death; for 'He who does them shall live by them' (Gal. 3:12, Lev. 18:5). Even so, it is not law as a freestanding entity for such cannot be. It is law that is the very law of God, the very God of law that is life. 'With thee is the fountain of life,' the psalmist said (Psa. 36:9, cf. 87:7), and the same psalmist said, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul' (Psa. 19:7). As we have said before, law must not be detached from God, otherwise it becomes nothing less than a legal tyrant. The conscience under such law also is tyrannical. The human spirit is deeply burdened and, finally, 'crushed' or the evil of 'light that is darkness' moves in upon the

personality and the terrifying Pharisee is created.

#### OBEDIENCE-COMMANDED AND SPONTANEOUS

One of the problems humans face—by reason of the fall of man—is to accept the concepts of law, commands and authority. Hence when these words are mentioned a barrier to them is already present. We cannot go into the deep problem of man's anger against God for the way things have turned out in the history of creation. Doubtless anger makes for irrationality, and then the re-rationalising of our own sins and failures so that we can justify ourselves. In any case, we are left with the fact that constant mention of law, commands and authority arouses anger.

We deeply resent it when we discover that whilst there is a way out of guilt and the heavy legalism of law as Paul has shown us, yet we are still required to fulfil law. Even the assurance that such obedience is not required for justification and salvation does not lessen the disappointment of some people. Yet we are faced with the facts that 'the flesh is at enmity with the law of God,' and God plans our justification so we, in practice, 'might fulfil the just requirements of the law.' The precepts, prescriptions and commands of the New Testament appear to outweigh in quantity and nature those of the Old Testament. It seems, somehow, that there is more 'law' in the new covenant, than in the old.

So then, in the face of what we have spoken, the problem arises as to how there can be an obedience which is at once voluntary and involuntary, an obedience which is spontaneous and yet at the same time mandatory, ie. inescapably commanded.

The demand of Romans 6:17—'obedient from the heart'—is a rare one. We saw that in Deuteronomy 30:6 God says He will circumcise the hearts of His people so that

they will love Him. We also discussed the motivation in Jeremiah 31:31-34 where the forgiveness of sins brings true knowledge of God, in the context of which God plants His law in our inward parts' writing the law in the heart. Also He cleanses that heart' and puts in a new spirit. All of this motivates to the obedience of love and gratitude. We may think the human response to God's love is but a tenuous thing, yet deeper than human response is God's own love constantly gripping man. 'The love of Christ constrains me'' does not mean our love for Christ, but his for us. This alone explains the spontaneous nature of obedience, ie. 'We love because he first loved us.' Only then can we say, 'his commandments are not burdensome.' So then, obedience is spontaneous through motivating love.

Having said this, we may feel relieved that obedience is a voluntary matter which thus leaves man's dignity unimpaired. He is not a driven creature: he still seems to have some strong autonomy out of which he may work. This reasoning is wrong: man is not truly man when he is in any way autonomous. We suggested above that it is a relief to be commanded: we are safe in the commanding sovereignty of God, yet we have still not said all. We have omitted two things. The first is that God's command is His word and His word has within it the dynamic to move man, thrusting him into obedience, especially in face of His love. The second is that obedience from the heart carries with it its own satisfaction, thus further motivating man to continual and even habituated obedience.

Let us consider the opposite, where failure to trust God and failure to obey Him brings a sense of loss and an increasing guilt. In such circumstances, man is always uneasy and he recedes from fellowship with God. Whilst God's grace does not lessen, man's use of that grace does, and so he thinks God has decreased His fellowship with him. This is not so: His grace never ceases to work, but disobedience

seems to alienate us from that love.

We must conclude by saying that the people of God have always known the joy of being commanded. There is an element mysteriously hidden from the rebellious which is the very essence of life, oneness with God, abiding in Him as He, too, abides in us and with us. It may be that our sense of failure will drive us back to God, but better than this is the sense of joy that comes with obedience and draws us on more and more towards that sanctification of our person in which we are involved, especially through the process of obedience.

What we must note at the last is that obedience is not simply the carrying out of a system of laws, precepts, prescriptions and commands. It is the nature of those which is enriching to the person who obeys; it is not even that he has not failed, or that he has succeeded in obedience; it is that all such commands and laws are functional within the structured creation of God and lead us not merely to be 'good' but to be fellow workers with God in His total plan for the entire creation, both in time and eternity. That is why faith and hope are always linked with love. That is why—in the last analysis—sanctification pertains to love, hope and faith' and why obedience can be at the one time both commanded and spontaneous. This is shown by the *command* to love and the motivating joy that results from the enjoined prescription.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

***THE CONTINUING BATTLE  
FOR HOLINESS***

Shortly we will consider the ways in which we are called upon to effect practical holiness, but, before that, we need to understand the nature of the conflict which arose at the time of the Fall, and which still obtains in the unending battle against evil. Paul is referring to that conflict when he says in Galatians that we can begin in the Spirit but end in the flesh; we know that grace liberates us from law and flesh, but we revert—so often—to the principle of flesh. He indicates that in some way law and flesh are linked: ‘I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh . . . but if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law’ (Gal. 5:16, 18).

It would be helpful to our understanding to see how the matter began. In order to do this, we must recognise that God gave commandments to created man and his woman. One was, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’ (Gen. 1:28). The second was, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’ (Gen. 2:16-17). The first commandment was positive, constituting man’s stewardship

of creation, his working with God in the universe. The second commandment was firstly an invitation to eat freely of all the trees, and then a prohibition against eating of the one tree which would do them harm.

Having been created by God, having been given each other, the primal couple was apparently satisfied, innocent of deviousness; they were guileless. Genesis 3:1-6 reveals the temptation, the Fall, and the results of both.

Notice the technique used by the serpent: ‘Did God say, ‘‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden’’?’ There is an insinuation here, calculated to get the woman to think about the prohibition. When the woman tells the serpent that God has placed a prohibition on one tree, because eating of it will cause death, the serpent says, ‘You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like [ie. as] God, knowing good and evil.’ Genesis 1:26-27 reveals that man was already *like* God, and so to become ‘*like* God’ would be an impossible task. To be *as* God would present a fascinating prospect. In other words, *to go contrary to the law would be freedom*.

It is notable that Romans 7:7-12 fits perfectly into this matter of the temptation and the Fall:

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

In reading this’ we see several things. First’ the prohibition to eat of the tree was the law God had given. Second, had the law not said, ‘Thou shalt not eat,’ then the basis for

coveting eating of the tree would not have been present. In innocence there was not desire for this tree, but listening to the false word—'You will not die'—made the law a fascinating mandate to disobey. Third' the law was not law in any legalistic sense to the first couple until it seemed to be a barrier to freedom to be what the serpent was telling them they essentially were. Fourth, the commandment which was intended to keep them in life, now became—under the serpent and sin—the means for sin to come alive in man. Fifth, sin was thus able to kill man, for *in the day he ate thereof he surely died*.

#### THE CONTINUING COMPLEX OF THE SERPENT, SIN, FLESH AND DEATH

We have stated before that it is sin and its guilt which keeps man in the grip of Satan, sin, the flesh and death. The Cross has taken the guilt and broken the hold. Even so, the mode of working of these four enemies has not changed, nor have their attempts ceased in the case of a person being redeemed. It is regenerated man who is so thoroughly attacked.

If we look above at the passage quoted from Romans 7:7-12, we can immediately see the problem. It is this, that if we do not, by faith, constantly see and rely on the fact that *we are not under law, but under grace*, then the forbidding law will always stand before us. We will always feel hedged about by it, and open to the temptation *to get free of it*. We will always imagine our liberty lies outside the law. Hence, if in any sense we see the law as legal, then the whole problem of temptation to disobedience, and the accompanying guilt, will keep occurring. In other words, we will again be gripped in the syndrome which Paul describes in Romans 7:7-13.

This is precisely what happened in the churches of Galatia.

#### LAW, SIN AND FLESH IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Prior to examining what is described in Galatians, let us get it quite clear that Satan, his powers (the world system), sin, the fear of death and the law are never apart, even though each of these *enemies* has its own distinctive being. The law is an unwilling tool of Satan, sin, and the flesh. Death is not of itself man's enemy, but man knows the sting of it as, and through, sin.

In practice we mean that Satan will tempt as 'that ancient serpent, the devil,' and will do this by calling God's law in question. This will give sin leverage, for it appeals to the flesh of man to be against law, and oriented towards self fulfilment, self-extension and self-assertion. Thus these enemies work together in the way Paul describes in Romans 7, and the writer of Genesis in chapter 3 of that book. Seeing this, we are able to understand what Paul is describing in Galatians. It is this:

1. The Galatians heard the word of the Cross. The word of the Cross delivered them from the law. Justification was by faith—'hearing with faith'—and the gift of the Spirit which came to them by faith and not by the law (3:1-2, 2:16, 4:4).
2. The law could only bring death, and could not justify: 'All who rely on works of the law are under a curse'; 'by works of the law shall no one be justified'; 'the law was our custodian until Christ.' Only the Son could redeem (4:4- 5).
3. All justification' redemption and reception of the Spirit is *by faith*' ie. by grace through faith.
4. With the advent of the Judaisers, law was presented to the

church, which itself was mostly composed of (former) Gentiles. It *was* the concept of law which seemed to have an incredible fascination for the believers. Time and again in the letter' Paul says law-observance draws people back into bondage and immaturity.

5. Paul thus links *law* and flesh together. Law did not give justification or the gift of the Spirit. To be under *law* is to go the way of *flesh*. The Spirit is against the flesh; the law encourages *the flesh* because of ego-effort to obey law. Thus' to walk by the Spirit is to refuse the desires (lust) of *the flesh*.

The mandate becomes the occasion for sin to incite the ego to rebellion and the old drama is played over again and again. The ego relishes the opportunity to show its prowess and moral power in obeying law. Hence it scorns grace, and thus is caught up in the old sin-guilt-judgement complex' making it strive even more to accomplish perfection in obedience' which' in the last analysis' is not obedience at all.

### THE PRACTICAL USE OF OUR STUDY

Holiness is—on one front of the battle—fighting Satan, the world, sin, fear of death, and the flesh. To fight these, a man (or woman) must know that they have no claim over him, even as they attack him. Where he stands firm in the faith they cannot touch him. What he must maintain unwavering, as his banner above him and the slogan upon his lips, is, 'I am not under law, but under grace!' Going back through our last two chapters we must then come to the following conclusion. Fallen man is under law and thus the victim of the enemies known as Satan' the world' sin' the flesh, the fear of death and the law' all of which use (objective) guilt to accuse and trap man. Because of the Cross and the Resurrection, the believer is freed from the enemies, and yet this is only that he may 'fulfil the just requirements of

the law,' ie. do what the law demands. Even as he does this, he must keep in mind that failure or sin still cannot hold him in thrall because the question of the condemnation of the law has been settled: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.'

When the believer faces up to the law in order to fulfil it, he does so with the knowledge that, should he fail, nothing will have changed. He is still justified, accepted by grace, and, indeed, sanctified. He refuses to allow the law to be used as a lever by sin. He now loves the law, delights in it, and desires to fulfil its 'just requirements.' This then makes sense of Galatians 5:13-14, 'For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "**You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**"' That is, the law is truly fulfilled when the believer loves. The law goes on being the law but it does not bring condemnation to the true believer, ie. the person who is saved by grace.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

***PRACTICAL HOLINESS IN PRACTICE (1)***

Armed now with this knowledge about the flesh, and aware that its precocious and incorrigible nature operates through sin and law, we may set about living the holy life. True, we must keep in mind that we are creatures of grace, served by the Father along with the Son and the Spirit, and that we are in the corporate living situation of the church; for keeping such in mind will arm us for the battle. Even so, we are given instructions for the daily battle with evil, the daily exercise of living in determined obedience.

**THE PROPHYLACTIC PREPARATION**

Certain stances, certain states of mind, certain mind sets are necessary as a preventative against sin and failure. Look at the following:

- Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. . . Be sober, be watchful (I Pet. 5:6, 8a).
- God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God (James 4:6-7).
- Therefore gird up your minds' be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:13).
- Be strong in the Lord. . . with all prayer and supplication (Eph. 6:10, 18a).

- Let any one who thinks he that stands take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:12).
- Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:16).
- Let us not grow weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9).
- Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).
- Exhort one another every day . . . that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13).
- Let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works. . . encouraging one another (Heb. 10:24-25).
- Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly, teach and admonish *one another* in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Col. 3:16).
- Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth (Col. 3:2).
- Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if these is anything worthy of praise, *think about these things* (Phil. 4:8).

These passages speak about humility' dependence upon God, preparedness, use of the Lord's power, awareness of evil's persistence in action, mutual exhortation and a deliberate setting of the mind on the true things. When a person sins' it is more often than not that he (or she) has been slack' dilatory' careless and not on the alert. In one sense the sin was committed away back at the point of culpable slackness. To keep alert is to minimise the victories of evil.

**THE AWARENESS OF ASSURANCE**

The believer must be assured of certain things concerning himself, namely that he has repented and exercised faith, that he has been forgiven all his sins' and justified through grace. He must know that he is regenerate, having his sins purified, and having been brought into the people of God.

He must know that he has received the gift of the Holy Spirit, has the Son and Father indwelling him and also— from their place of highest authority—intervening for him when evil sets out to destroy him. He must keep on seeing that the past cannot bedevil him, and that the present is in the hands of God's sovereignty. He must understand that the future can only assure him and give him hope. Whilst technically and theologically he may know these things to be so, he must develop his awareness, and use it to give him fortitude, for the battle will be formidable.

#### THE ACTION OF PRACTICAL HOLINESS

We assume that obedience to God's will is the core principle of holiness. Paul has told us that we 'have become slaves to righteousness,' ie. 'righteousness for sanctification.' Whether we see this to be the third use of law, or whether we think in terms of spontaneous obedience from the heart to what the Spirit guides us to see and understand as the will of God, does not greatly matter at this point. We have seen in Isaiah 5:16 that 'the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.' So when we execute righteousness, its goal and outcome is holiness.

Colossians 3:1 to 4:1 contains the principles we require for holy living. They are as follows:

##### Colossians 3:1-4

We have a new identity—we have been raised with Christ, ie. we died once and were buried, and in so doing have escaped the evil powers which once held us. Elsewhere we are told we have been brought to life with Christ (Eph. 2:5' cf. Gal. 2:20). Christ is in the place of authority, so we share in that. It is now natural and proper for us to set our minds

on the things of the Kingdom. We live in this world without being of it. We are very much of God's created world, but not Satan's evil system. The action of our death to all that is evil took place in Christ, and so, as his life is hidden in God, so ours are hidden in Him too. One day, when Christ is revealed, we will also be revealed—in glory.

##### Colossians 3:5-11

These are important verses. Now that we have our new identity in Christ and heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20), anything earthly, ie. fleshly, is foreign to us. That is not to say our faculties cannot respond to sin, and at times have not done so. They can respond, and they have. Even so, the remedy is in our hands: 'Put to death . . . fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.' It is here we come to the heart of holiness: we see the wrong and evil that our members (faculties) *can* commit, but we reject them. Indeed we kill them. From one point of view we see that Christ, by his death, has withdrawn the dynamic of these things, since he has borne guilt and denied them a hold over us. From the other point of view we must see they have no place, power or action in our lives. *We can do them to death because he has done them to death.* This is something positive we do to negate evil.

We pause to consider the things in themselves, ie. fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness (which is idolatry). We are horrified to think that such things happen in the people of God; but they do. We front up to them as men who are dead to that kind of thing. They no longer belong to our mode of life. We not only kill; we positively put away. What do we put away? The answer is anger, wrath, malice, slander and foul talk. Just like that; we put them away. *Anger is* a settled attitude of mind. Matthew 5:22 tells us that to be angry with the brother is to be

liable to judgement. *Wrath* might be described as the bursting out of that anger. Cain is the classic example, for murder was born in his anger. Ephesians 4:26 says, 'Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger., We go to bed with anger. and its increase brings danger and tragedy.

To think that we can just *put it away!*

Likewise with malice; we can put it away! *Malice* is vindictive, setting out to bring sorrow to, and divide, human relationships. *Slander* is deliberately speaking falsehoods concerning both God and man, with the intention of deceiving others and demeaning the ones slandered: there is no mercy in slander. *Foul talk* is abusive language, the utterance of spitefulness with evil innuendoes and forms of obscenity. We are not to allow these to proceed from our mouths. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul enjoins the opposite' namely' 'Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, *that it may impart grace to those who hear.*'

Paul advises, 'Do not lie to one another.' This is a powerful factor in holiness of life' ie. telling the truth. 'Therefore putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbour' (Eph. 4:25). It all sounds so simple—and it is. Holiness is simple: it is sin that is complicated. To lie brings compounding complications. In Ephesians 4:15, Paul speaks about 'truthing it in love.' Living life is 'truthing it.' Lying is not only with the mouth. It is the way of a person. Like all the things we have spoken about—anger, wrath, malice, slander and foul talk—lying is part of an old life.

Consider again the works which we have just described: fornication, impurity' passion' evil desire, covetousness and idolatry. These are all part of the old humanity' the fleshly rebelliousness of man against God. What we *put to death* is one with what we *put away*.

Under further examination' these lusts are revealed as the

opposites of things beautiful and natural to created beings. *Fornication* is simply illicit sexuality; *impurity* is uncleanness in the same realm. *Passion* is over-riding intensity of feeling and action in which genuine control is lost and shameful things result. *Evil desire* is the flesh rioting in its wishes, as against good wholesome desire in the richness of life. *Covetousness* is the desire for another's goods, gifts, talents, capacities and acquirements. It is the desire to possess them, possibly for the purpose of becoming secure' but instead it results in less security and increased desire for more and more things. It equals *idolatry*' for such is the giving of worth to some object' relationship' ambition or possession which rightly should go to God.

All of these are attempts to get joy without God' fulfilment apart from Him. They are a denial of His goodness towards His creation.

They all belong to the *old (Adamic) nature*. This 'old' is not merely old because of years. It is tired' effete' worked out' decaying' doomed to death and pathetic non-being. What then' of *the new man*? The new man springs from the Cross. Ephesians 2:14-15 says:

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

There is a new man minted purely from the crucible of the Cross, taken down into death and brought up in resurrection. This is the corporate humanity to which we belong. We participate in it. It has personal connotation and corporate connotation. Somewhere in the past *we put it on*. We may think in terms of baptism' casting off the filthy clothes of our old life' and putting on baptismal white garments.

The whole community is the whole new man' but each is a participant in that humanity—Christ. The whole community' in Christ' is being renewed in its knowledge of God

which was once so rich at creation' but which has become dulled' defaced and lifeless, devoid of true knowledge. Now relationally obtained knowledge is growing, and the beauty of the image is being marvellously formed afresh. No wonder James cries, 'Of his own will he brought us forth by the *word of truth* that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures' (1:18). This is the same James who speaks of 'men, who are made in the likeness of God' (3:9).

The corporate nature of this new man is seen in that 'Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all' (Col. 3:1 1). When we link this verse with I Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:28 then we begin to understand the 'new humanity.' It is old humanity which was crucified (Rom. 6:6) when Christ was 'made sin' for it (II Cor. 5:21). As a result, the elect within that old humanity have gone through death- burial and have been raised. This is the new community, and racial, social and gender differences can in no way be barriers to total oneness within that community. We have been baptised by 'oneness' Spirit into 'oneness' body, and have been made to drink 'oneness' Spirit, the result of which is a humanity not seen before in history, and which has been called 'the third race.'

We have spoken about holiness being carried out in the corporate situation and relationship. We must emphasise that there is not really individualistic, privatised growth but rather growth which derives from and contributes to the whole community. It must be emphasised that the ultimate completion of the growing process is eschatological, ie. it concludes in the end-time. We have seen this to be the case with holiness, and since renewal of the image and holiness are inseparable, this is not to be wondered at.

Verse 11 finishes with the statement, 'but Christ is all and in all.' This links with 'that God may be everything to every one' (I Cor. 15:28), and 'the fullness of him who fills all in

all' (Eph. 1:23). Colossians tells us that all things are created in Christ, through him and for him, and that via redemption, God reconciles all things through him, so that there is nothing in bringing about the new humanity that is not of Christ. This applies to dying, rising, putting to death, putting off, and—as we shall see—putting on. All action and result derives from him.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

***PRACTICAL HOLINESS IN PRACTICE (2)*****Colossians 3:12-17**

The rich things of the new humanity' are to be put on' consciously and deliberately. They are required: 'Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion' kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.' We saw in the first three verses of the chapter that we have our identity in Christ, and that evil things such as in verses 5 and 8 are incongruent with this new identity. Now Paul gives us a fresh revelation of our identity, for we are 'God's chosen ones'' 'holy'' and 'beloved.' Each of these bears extended examination—which in fact, we cannot here do. They tell us that those in the new man (the new community)—which is also the basis of our identity—are *elect*, ie. chosen by God for Himself' and so there can be no question of their being alone, outside God, salvation, sanctification and glorification (cf. Rom. 8:29). They are *holy*, ie. saints, but really separated out from that which is not holy, and this links with *beloved*, for His love has settled on them as against others who are not within the elect people.

Having this rich identity, they are then to *put on* things consistent with the new life. *Compassion* is literally 'bowels of compassion,' ie. affection and sympathy as in Philippians 2:1 . The term can be translated 'a heart of pity.' *Kindness* is care and concern for another whilst not being

obligated to have such. It is an active element. *Lowliness* in practice is giving honour to another, not considering oneself: it is self-humbling though not humiliation. The lowly have no heady views of themselves. *Meekness* is a gentle spirit' not harsh towards others, and *patience* is long-suffering' putting up with opposition without reacting. It is going beyond what is deemed normal acceptance of difficulty, injustice, persecution, opposition and cruelty.

Within these things is forbearance, and forgiveness, perhaps the most difficult exercise in human relationships, since forgiveness is total or not at all. Paul then speaks of 'putting on' again. 'Put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.' Love is *the* unitive power, by nature of the case. I Corinthians 13:7 says, 'Love bears all things' believes all things' hopes all things, endures all things.' Love which does that must make for unity. Later we shall see how love makes for holiness' but here Paul is saying that love is beyond all' the very highest, and he is saying we can put on love. Romans 5:5 tells us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts. The point is that we *put it on*.

The next word Paul uses is 'let' ie. '*Let* the word of Christ dwell in you richly,' with '*let* the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.' The body is called to such peace, the word brings mutual exhortation and teaching. It brings rich worship. Then' finally' Paul uses the word 'do.' 'And whatever *you do*, in word or deed' *do* everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.'

**Colossians 3:18 to 4:1**

In this segment on holy living, Paul talks to families. We are familiar with his idea of the family. Wives should be subject to their husbands; husbands should love their wives and not be harsh to them. Children should obey their

parents and fathers should be understanding with their children. In the wider circle of slaves and masters' there should be faithfulness on the part of the slave towards his master, and of the master towards the slave, seeing the master IS himself a servant of Christ. Whilst all this seems normal enough, it is really the dynamic side of a holy life. If life is not lived with integrity on the domestic side, it will have no great power towards the world.

### THE WAY OF PRACTICAL HOLINESS

Let us go back now and see the verbs that are used in the imperative. Commands given are: (a) 'put to death,' (b) 'put them all away,' with which is linked 'you have put off,' (c) 'put on,' with which is linked 'you have put on,' (d) 'let,' and (e) 'do.'

If we look at these verbs then they tell us much. Holiness is a matter of will and act. We may argue as to the ability of a Christian person to follow out the action contained in these verbs. We may say he can or he cannot do them, but that exercise is mainly academic. God commands the actions and we must do them. Firstly we must have the disposition, and this may matter most of all. Secondly we need the power, and we must have no doubt that God will supply it. Of course we must keep in mind that 'when I would do good, sin is present with me.' We must realise that putting to death, putting away, putting on and putting off will always be opposed by the sin-Satan-world-law-flesh complex. That must not unduly disturb us. Since their legal hold over us is broken, God is their own power countered by the direct power of God.

At this point we should be gripped by the immense practical possibilities that exist when we set out to obey God. It seems incredible that we should succeed in these exercises of

putting to death, putting away, putting off and putting on. The sheer fact of *doing* them, especially in the light of Romans 8:13 ('for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live'), should be most inspiring, satisfying and rewarding. The whole point is that *this can be done!* What then is there left to say?

There are encouraging things left to say. In regard to Satan, James says, 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (4:7b). Peter adds 'Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith' (I Pet. 5:8b-9). John also has a good deal to say on the same score: 'I am writing to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you' and you have overcome the evil one,' 'for greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world,' 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith' (I John 2:14b, 4:4, 5:4).

There are other statements such as 'we are debtors, not to the flesh' to live according to the flesh' (Rom. 8:12), 'they that are Christ's crucified the flesh' (Gal. 5:24) 'sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14), 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (I Cor. 15:55), and 'he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light' (II Tim. 1:10).

There are also admonitions to receive power, or to recognise the power that is working in us:

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might (Eph. 1:19).

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Get strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (Eph. 6:10). I can do all things in him who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13).

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom. 8:37).

By . . . the power of God (I Cor. 6, 7).

By the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13, cf. Acts 1:8).

These and more statements in the New Testament encourage us to believe we can undertake the practical matter of holiness, and not be timid, for ‘God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, and love, and a sound mind’ (11 Tim. 1:7).

All of this presupposes that we abide in God, in His Son and in His Spirit, and abiding is no mere word for a pious attitude. To dwell in God is to dwell in holiness: to have God dwell in us is to have His holiness abide in us. Such thoughts are so high that they are difficult to grasp; they are so dynamic as to cause us great awe and fear, as indeed they should. Holiness of life is the most serious matter of all. Were God not love then His holiness would destroy us all, immolate us in its intensity of purity. Isaiah’s cry in the temple, ‘I am lost . . . I am a man of unclean lips . . . my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,’ would be our cry at the end. Our ‘fear and trembling’ would be of little value—were God not love in His holiness.

### BEFORE AND AFTER

It would be a good exercise to read the New Testament thoroughly and draw out the contrasts of ‘before’ and ‘after,’ ie. ‘You were...but...’ Ephesians 4:17-19 is a passage which begins to speak of the difference:

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practise every kind of uncleanness.

This is a terrifying statement’ but it is followed’ in relief’ by what has happened through Christ. In verses 20-24, the apostle says:

You did not so learn Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Then in verses 25–31, Paul instructs us in the life of holiness:

Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

This, in principle, parallels Colossians 3:8-17. The contrasts are many—too many for us to consider in detail—but the principle of them is encouraging. For example, Ephesians 5:1 to 6:19 constitutes a rich exhortation concerning both love and light, and is an extension of the passage we have been studying in Colossians. It ought’ therefore’ to be closely studied. New Testament *paraenesis*<sup>6</sup> (ie. exhortation) is as relevant to us today as in the days of the early church. The modes of working out the exhortations may differ but the principles are immutable’ seeing they deal with the moral characters of God and man.

It is imperative, then, that we see the connection between

<sup>6</sup> Set Appendix One. pp 224 225. ‘The *Paraentic* Passages of the N.T.’

light and love, ie. holiness and the goodness of God, and we will now attempt to do so.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

***LOVE AND HOLINESS***

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In Colossians 3:14, we read, 'And above all these put on love' which binds everything together in perfect harmony.' We saw that love is the power to integrate and bind together the body. It is unitive. Paul may be saying that love is higher in quality than the other elements he has been mentioning, but it seems its function is to unite. This is very clearly seen in the famous passage of John 17:20-26, which should be read thoroughly' for here it is love which reveals the oneness of the Father and the Son and which will make the people of God to come to that same oneness.

In I Corinthians 12' the gifts are of immense importance because of their functional usefulness. However, Paul speaks of that which surpasses the gifts. He says, 'earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.' That way is love' and Paul shows that the gifts are intended to subserve love. Indeed' without love they are valueless. It may well be said that without holiness' love (so-called) is valueless' and without love' holiness is not true holiness.

**GOD IS LOVE AND HOLINESS**

John's first letter has two important statements' namely 'God is light'' and 'God is love.' These statements are not

merely theological: they are direct revelation, and without them, theology has no substance. Take the first statement, 'God is light and in him is no darkness at all.' This means He is not only holy, but holiness Himself. Hence when the letter later declares 'God is love,' then the two must be taken in conjunction. Light without love is not light; love without light is not love. This comes close to Paul's 'truthing it in love' (Eph. 4:14), for holiness is God's truth, indeed, God Himself in action.

In Isaiah, God is spoken of in the following terms:

I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King (43:15).

The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker (45:11).

Our Redeemer—the Lord of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel (47:4)

The Lord your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (49:26).

Your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer (54:5).

He will come to Zion as Redeemer (59:20).

Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old [from eternity] is thy name (63:16b).

It is inescapable that God's holiness expresses itself in His love for Israel, and the redemption He brings is the expression of His love. Elsewhere we have seen that God is jealous for His holy name, and He redeems Israel with a view to vindicating that name. Even so, His elective love for Israel is one with His own holiness. His holiness is dynamic, confronting evil and destroying it. In this manner His loving kindness is redemptive. Being holy—and by reason of this holiness—God is, at the same time, Creator, Maker, Father, Husband and Redeemer. John's understanding of God as holiness (light) and love is firmly seated in the Old Testament.

## HOLINESS AND LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

God's nature in the Old Testament is shown primarily as holiness. Israel doubtless knows His elective love, His loving kindness and grace (*chen* and *chesed*), but the passages quoted above show that, in some way, His love issues from His holiness. This is not to say it is of lesser importance, but the New Testament appears to place love as the primary revelation of His being. I say 'appears' because when we take the New Testament as a whole, holiness is no less important than in the Old Testament. It is simply that His holiness is expressed more and more in terms of His love. This means we must be sure we understand what the New Testament calls 'love.'

What then do we mean by God's love? The answer must really be in terms of His actions' especially His action in redeeming us. John says it plainly enough in I John:

By this we know love' that he laid down his life for us (3:16).

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (4:9-10).

Perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment (4:18).

In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so are we in this world (4:17).

Again' John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.' The purposeful and indispensable giving of the Son on the Cross is the *action* of God's love.

Such love has been called 'disinterested,' meaning that the motive is not self-gain for God. This is about the closest we can go to saying God's love is unconditional' as it is expressed in such passages as Hosea 14:4: 'I will love them

freely.’ In practice, we can generally discern what is love and what is not. God’s love is acknowledged to be shown in creation, in providence (His constant act of sustaining creation, providing for its needs), in covenant, in salvation (this linked with covenant, and in the preservation of the elect, so that they may reach the life, glory and inheritance planned for them. In both the Old and New Testaments, God’s love is seen in election, but His love is not confined to the elect as such, for in Matthew 5:43-48, God is seen to love both the good and the evil, the just and unjust, and without partiality provides for their needs. Doubtless, in a covenantal sense, God can be said to *love* Jacob (His elect people) and to *hate* Esau (the non-elect), but we must not equate that kind of love and hate with our emotional equivalents. Jesus demanded that in certain cases we should hate our parents, our brethren, our spouses and our children, but not in the emotional sense we connect with human passions (Mal. 1:2-3, Matt. 10:34-39, Luke 14:26).

### LOVE AND THE GODHEAD

Previously we have seen that not only is God holy, but that each member of the Godhead seeks to establish us in holiness (see Chapters 15 and 16). The same may be said concerning love: the Father loves us (I John 4:9-10, John 3:16, Rom. 8:32, Eph. 2:4, II Thess. 2:16, Rom. 5:8f.); the Son loves us (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 5:2); and the Spirit loves, us particularly in showing God’s love and pouring it into our hearts (Rom. 5:5, 15:30, Gal. 5:22-23, cf. John 16:12-15).

The response to this love is that we also love, ie. the Father (I Cor. 2:10, Rom. 8:28), the Son (I Pet. 1:8), and the Spirit in whom we love others (Rom. I 5:30, Col. I:8). At the same time, as we have seen in John’s first epistle’ we

cannot have love without also having holiness, and we cannot have true holiness without love. Our understanding, then, of both God’s love and His holiness, must spring from our encounter with God at the Cross. Someone has said that in the Cross, Christ died first for God and then for men: for God in order to vindicate His holiness by destroying the power and pollution of evil, and for men in order to make them holy unto God. This certainly follows the principle found in Ezekiel 36 and other Old Testament passages.

The reality of this is known in our relationships with God. They may spring from love but they must be holy. Peter says’

*But as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you invoke as Father him who judges each impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile (I Pet. 1:15-17).*

It can be seen that our holiness issues from the Father, and if we call upon Him as Father then we must live consistently with that invocation.

Paul likewise speaks of our separation from things impure. In II Corinthians 6:14 to 7:1’ he pursues this theme:

*Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,  
‘I will live in them and move among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.  
Therefore come out from them,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch nothing unclean;  
then I will welcome you,  
and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be my sons and daughters.*

says the Lord Almighty.’

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

Notice that the promise of cleansing and of His being Father to His children is sufficient motivation to accede to holiness: ‘Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God’ (7:1). Where there is the Holy Father (‘Hallowed be thy Name’) there is also the holy family.

On the same principle, the Son is made ‘our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption’ (I Cor. 1:30).

The Spirit who is the *Holy Spirit* is concerned to sanctify us (I Pet. 1:2,11 Thess. 2:13, Gal. 5:16-18,22-26). Thus we may conclude that whilst all persons of the Godhead operate in love towards us, they also operate in holiness, seeing these two as being one together.

### LOVE WORKS IN THE INTERESTS OF HOLINESS

There are two significant passages which seem to indicate that holiness issues from the work of love, and we will look at these shortly. First, however, let us look at the fact that works themselves must be done in love. In I Thessalonians 1:3, Paul speaks of ‘your work of faith and *labour* of love, and steadfastness of hope.’ In Revelation 2:19, Christ writes to the church of Thyatira commending it for ‘your works, your love and faith and service.’ He adds, ‘your latter works exceed the first.’ This is in contrast to the church at Ephesus whose works are *without love*. ‘I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.’ The church is to repent and to ‘do the works you did at first,’ ie. the

*works from the first love*. The ‘latter works’ of the church at Thyatira must have come from ‘the latter love,’ we might call it ‘love that has got its second wind.’ It is a maturer love than the first love and produces better works.

This makes the way for us now to quote our two passages. The first is Philippians 1:9-11:

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

We now quote the second, I Thessalonians 3:12-13, because in many ways it parallels the first:

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Note the principle in both of them. As love matures, it expands in growth. It becomes more sensitive, more discerning, more able to know what is genuine. This effects purity and blamelessness with a view to the day of Christ. It makes persons exercising this love to be filled with ‘the fruits of righteousness’ which, in terms of Romans 6:19-22, is holiness’ ie. ‘righteousness for sanctification.’ From being slaves of God we get the fruit: sanctification. In I Thessalonians 3:12-13’ it is much the same. As believers abound in love it reaches out not only to the brethren but to all men. This has the effect of establishing the heart ‘unblamable in holiness’ before both the Father and the Son.

### HOW DOES LOVE WORK HOLINESS?

If we wish to see a contra example then we should look at the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-6. The event

was a polluted one. The two had lied to the Holy Spirit, to men, and to God. They had sought the praise of men in saying they had given all, when they had kept back part for themselves. This kind of deceit and hypocrisy was most dangerous to the new church. What Christ had denounced in the Pharisees and Sadducees could soon become the nature of the new church. It was not a labour of love but of unholily self, a labour of the flesh. Had their act been pure then it would have been one of love.

To see the 'labour of love' of the early church, we look at what happened immediately following Pentecost and the baptism of the 3,000. At once they 'were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed to all, as any had need,' and 'no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.' Thus they were 'of one heart and soul' (Acts 2:44, 45, 4:32). There was the daily distribution of food and goods to those in need. This included care for the widows and orphans. True religion was to 'visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world' (James 1:27). It also was care for refugees and the homeless, giving hospitality even when it might bring danger from the powers that were ruling (Heb. 13:1-3). It was also to 'do good to all men' (Gal. 6:10), and to 'remember the poor' (Gal. 2:10).

It was in thinking of the needs of others that true love showed. It was the man who possessed this world's goods and gave nothing of them to those in need whose love was merely 'word and thought' and not 'in deed.' This man would stand condemned before God. Nor did love stop at social need. The gifts of the Spirit were to be used only in the service of love, ie. 'faith which works through love' (Gal. 5:6), for I Corinthians 13:1-3 shows the futility of gifts if they are not used in the service of love. Paul's advice was, 'through love be servants of one another' (Gal. 5:13).

## LOVE, THE LAW, OBEDIENCE AND HOLINESS

We have already covered this in Chapters 27 and 28. The point is that all the law is summed up in the one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Christ said the substance of the law and the prophets was to love God with one's whole being, and one's neighbour as one's self. The law itself is divided into two tables, love to God and love to one's neighbours. The precise details of that love are not set out because the law is of the widest dimensions, but there can be no doubt as to how one must act. This is the 'righteousness unto holiness.' Deeds done without holiness, without the love-gratitude of the redeemed person, are 'nothing worth' as the Collect so quaintly puts it.

Another way of understanding this is the principle of abiding of which we spoke previously. Jesus told his disciples that the Father, the Son and the Spirit would come and make their home in them, especially if they kept his commandments (John 14:15-23). In John 15:1-17, Jesus speaks of the disciples abiding in him, being obedient to the truth, and bringing forth fruit. He linked this abiding with the command to love. Abiding in him, they would love: loving, they would abide in him. To this John adds in his first letter 'God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God' and God abides in him' (4:16). He had said previously, 'No man has ever seen God; if we love one another' God abides in us and his love is perfected in us' (4:12).

It is abiding which takes the heaviness out of law, and makes it appear in its true light, the obedience to the nature of God which is functional for all of life, and for all creation. Hence, 'this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome' (5:3). If we have any doubt that this mutual abiding can take place then John's words encourage us to believe it can, and, for the Christian, has already taken place. 'All who keep his

commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us' (3:24). 'By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit' (4:13).

### CONCLUSION AS TO LOVE AND HOLINESS

We have said that holiness is the primary theme in the Old Testament, and that the demand for holiness is mandatory. Love is generally portrayed as covenant-love. When we come to the New Testament, a merely superficial reading of it will cause us to conclude that love supersedes holiness. Neither one of these two supersedes the other. In Ephesians 5, Paul enjoins us to 'walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.' He also urges us to 'walk as children of light.' He tells us to 'take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.' His strictures on darkness are strong indeed. No less is his emphasis on love throughout the epistle. (See 1:15, 2:4, 3:19, 4:2, 15-16, 5:2, 25, 28, 33, 6:23.)

Likewise John's first letter can almost be summed up in the two words 'light' and 'love.' Because God is light we have fellowship with Him when we walk in light. If we have sin we walk in darkness. Refusal to acknowledge darkness is to cut ourselves off from cleansing and forgiveness, and so from holiness. To hate the brother is to walk in darkness. 'He who loves his brother abides in the light.' Thus holiness is the exercise of love, and love the exercise of holiness. Because holiness and obedience go together then we can know God, who is love and holiness:

And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected (2:3-5).

Our conclusion would not be complete unless we were to mention the fruit of the Spirit. We have mentioned the gifts because they are the true means by which love can show itself. 'God so loved that he gave,' and giving is the way of love. It was so in the early church, and is so now. However, giving in love and for love's sake is one thing, and giving for receiving is another. Only God can give purely (James 1:17) and we can only give purely in love. Yet even beyond the gifts are the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit comes to us as a gift from God. The elements mentioned such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness, are not traits we develop, but fruit which the Spirit brings to us. This harvest is itself the very fruit of the Gospel. Love is the response to God's love. Joy is 'the joy of thy salvation,' and peace is Christ's peace made viable for us because of justification by which we have 'peace with God.'

So we might proceed, showing that the other fruit are a result of the Gospel as the Spirit applies it to our lives. We need not pause on this principle now. The main point is that where the fruit of the Spirit is, there also are both love and holiness. Further, these do not just make a perfect or rich character of the one to whom they come as a gift, but they are for the purposes of ministering to others, and witnessing to Christ. They represent our *bona fide* to the world as servants of Christ, though not as paragons or as impeccable people. If love brings the riches of sanctification, then the fruit of the Spirit enhances the process.

Finally we need to become aware of the riches of 'love, joy and peace.' They are not merely stimulants for us, provoking us to good works, but they are the very actions of love and holiness. It is in the obedience that they prove to be stimulating, and in this stimulation, holiness is a joyous experience. As we saw at the beginning of our book, holiness is an ontological necessity. It is in the exercise of love and holiness that we discover our true humanity, and so, our

true selves.

It must go without saying of course that whilst we are called upon to be obedient through love, yet that obedience itself cannot purely issue from us. It must be the result of the Father, the Son and the Spirit working in us, or, as we say, 'the grace of God in us.' That grace is sufficient for us, in that our weakness can only then be the situation in which strength can work fully. Thus we must continually use the term 'sanctification by grace,' even if it is not found anywhere, as such, in the text of Scripture.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

***THE FRUITS AND ACTIONS  
OF HOLINESS (1)***

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In Chapters 27 and 28, we have talked of some of the practical elements of holiness, especially as they relate to God's law and commands. We have seen that obedience to these springs from the motivation of love for God as it has been inspired by His love. Love for God inspires love for His law, and then that law has the strange and wonderful power to make us love God further, and also increases our love for law. The constant reading of Psalms 1, 19 and 119 enlarges this reverence for God and His law, and so holy fear also motivates us to increasing obedience.

We recognise at the same time that the law which we call 'moral' (ie. the ten commandments of the Old Testament) has been radicalised by Jesus' teaching. It has been implanted in our hearts by the new birth, by the dynamic inner work of the Holy Spirit, and is now called the 'law of love,' or, 'the law of Christ.' In our study of Colossians 3 (see Chapter 30), we saw Paul's instructions for practical holiness. In Romans 6:15-23, we saw also that when we yield our members to righteousness then the outcome is holiness, and the fruit of holiness is eternal life.

What we need to see, along with our understanding of the law and obedience, is that such obedience is in fact the doing of good works. The keeping of the moral law is undoubtedly

required of us, but it is not an exercise which is an end in itself. If this were the case then we would become moralists: law-keeping would occupy us, and preoccupy us. We must see law as functional, and as functional in the outworking of God's plan and purposes. In other words, true obedience accomplishes works: it is not merely 'not doing wrong, but doing right.' True obedience is productive, and what it produces can be called 'good works.'

### EVANGELICAL REACTION TO WORKS

We have seen that Paul's presentation of the condemnation of the law, and his constant statements that we are free from the law, have led many into disparaging the law, as though its primary function is to bring humanity into condemnation. Humanity brings itself into condemnation because of its breaking the law: the law must pronounce and execute that judgement. The primary purpose of the law is that we may know and do the will of God as it pertains to His creation. It is the true way of life, even though it cannot give life, particularly because it is 'weak' through the sinfulness of man (cf. Rom. 3:1-3). When we truly understand law, we do not wish to be free of obedience to it, especially because of love for God, and the action of the Spirit as He dwells within us.

If we have reacted against law, so too, we have reacted against the thought of works. There is no doubt that Paul's insistence that 'by the works of the law shall no one be justified,' has led many to reject works altogether. His other statement that salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast,' has underlined his opposition to works as against grace. Many have used this to reject works.

Of course Paul is not rejecting works. He is rejecting them as a means of justification. The whole Biblical thrust is

that man's sin is so deep, and his guilt so great, that nothing he can do as a person outside of Christ can justify him. His heart is deceitful and would betray him, were he to seek to justify himself by his actions. Man does not in fact seek after God or try to understand Him (Rom. 3:9-18), although he may protest that he does seek God, and even claim that he knows Him.

Does man seek to do works which will somehow ease his guilt, and make him acceptable in the sight of God? The answer is, 'Without doubt!' Man is constantly seeking to do those things which he would call 'good works.' He is trying always to justify himself before men, as Christ pointed out: 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God' (Luke 16:15). He also said that many 'loved the praise of men more than the praise of God' (John 12:43).

We might be greatly surprised to know how much of our life is spent justifying ourselves before others, let alone seeking to show ourselves as righteous to God. It has been pointed out by many that masochism (the infliction of suffering upon oneself) is one way in which man makes self-atonement. He inflicts suffering upon himself because of his guilt. Other forms of self-punishment, self-discipline and self-deprivation come easily when a person is trying to rid himself of guilt. In such cases the forms of punishment would be looked upon as justifiable good works.

For some people the rejection of good works as a means of justification presents a problem, for they may lack a constant sense of grace. In this sense they are forcibly turned to doing self-justifying works when they have guilt, and some kind of a mental dichotomy is created. This conflict greatly compounds their guilt. Attempts at practical holiness become excruciating for them, for works are not done out of grace, and legalism becomes rooted in the person.

On the other hand, there are those Christians who have so rejected works that they become suspicious of any kind of work at all. Because of this, they suffer from a guilt which is hidden and incipient. As we will see, works are an essential part of man's life; without them, he is empty and pointless. He may risk coming into inordinate pride by the doing of them, but better that than he be a human 'lay-about' in God's universe. Refusal to do works for God and man is a form of rebellion.

### THE GOODNESS OF WORKS—GOD'S AND MAN'S

#### God Always Works

Jesus said, 'My Father is working still, and I am working' (John 5:17). He was making the point that true works could, and should, be done on the Sabbath. When God 'rested from His works,' it did not mean He became workless, but that He rested from the works of creation, having completed them. The works of providence, of necessity, had to continue. Hence God is always working in creation, providence, redemption, and the ultimate renewal of the universe, after which He will still go on working. God is the true Worker of the universe. The Scriptures ascribe great praise to God as Worker. The psalmist cried, 'All thy works praise thee, O God!'

#### Man Must Work

Part of the function of the image of God in man is that he work. Genesis 1:28 sets out God's mandate for man's work, and it is comprehensive: 'And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea

and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ' The rich variety of work set out before him makes man a person of many parts. Man is—for the most part—fascinated by the works he can do. He is wholesome when he is working, degenerate when he is not.

For the Christian who desires to live in godly holiness, works constitute an indispensable part of his living. Jesus affirmed the nature of works when he said, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 5:16). His own work and works display the nature of his life. It is through his works that we are redeemed.

Jesus was constantly occupied in the doing of works, the fulfilling of his Father's will. In John's Gospel, he makes over twenty references to doing true works, and in addition refers many times to doing the will of God. It is food and drink for him to do the will of God. He seeks not his own will, but the will of Him who sent him. He keeps on saying that what he is doing is the will of Him who sent him (John 4:34' 5:30, 6:38- 40), and he urges others to do the Father's will (John 7:17). As for works' it is Christ's food to finish the works God has given him to do. The works he does witness to him and his authentic ministry. The works that he does have first been shown to him by the Father: indeed these are the only works he does. God will show him even greater works so that the disciples may marvel. They must combine with him to do the works of God. The time will come when they will do even greater works than Jesus himself (John 4:34' 5:20' 36' 9:4, 10:25, 32, 37, 38, 14:10-12). His statement on the last night—the night of his betrayal—was, 'Father. . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do' (John 17:1-5); hence his triumphant cry on the Cross, at his death, 'It is finished!'

Christians should need little to convince them that true works are an essential part of their obedience to God. Of the

normal labour of life that is necessary to every person, Paul says bluntly, 'If anyone will not work, let him not eat' (11 Thess. 3:10). Paul has a doctrine of work, namely that one works to provide for one's family and one's self, and to help the needy. Idlers are to be admonished and the weak to be helped by those who can work (see Eph. 4:28, I Thess. 5:14, II Thess. 3:10-12, I Tim. 5:11f.).

In regard to the good works which Jesus said we should do before men so that they will glorify God (Matt. 5:6), we find much teaching in the gospels, the epistles and the Revelation. The apostles will do greater works than Christ (John 14:12), and they did in that they had the Gospel which Christ had created by his life, death, resurrection and ascension. They too were endued with the Holy Spirit, and their work was not only in Palestine, but to the ends of the earth. Such works were planned by God before time to be worked out in time (Eph. 2:9-10).

The grace of God has appeared, not only 'bringing salvation' but with the aim in view that God should purify for Himself a people, 'zealous of good works' (Titus 2:11-14), and such are commanded to be 'fruitful in every good work' (Col. 1:10). Their works spring from, and are motivated by, love and reverence for God (I Thess. 1:3, 11 Cor. 5:11, 14, cf. John 14:15, 15:14, I John 4:19—5:3). If works are not done from love they are useless (Rev. 2:4-5). When done from 'the first love' they are good, and when done from more mature love then the 'latter works exceed the first.' We saw that holiness through love is a matter of doing acts of 'righteousness unto holiness' out of ever increasing maturity (Rom. 6:19, Phil. 2:9-11, I Thess. 3:12-13).

Works are greatly important. In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus says, to each church, 'I know your works.' In some cases these are good, and in some cases not. In at least one case these works can be called 'dead' (Rev. 3:1). 'Dead works' in the Letter to the Hebrews are sins (6:1, 9:14). Self-justifying

works are an abomination to God (Luke 16:15). Works, therefore, have to be true and pure, for they will ultimately be tested 'as by fire,' and those works which have been done without love (I Cor. 13:1-3) will be burned up. The true works will remain. They will be man's reward from God, hence one needs to be greatly careful about the doing of works lest they be futile, and the person be unapproved (I Cor. 9:26) and even lose his reward (11 John 8). To go to God empty-handed would be a sad and pointless thing.

Paul could claim, 'I laboured more than them all,' and whilst he attributed his success to God's grace (I Cor. 15:10) he nevertheless made his point that he laboured consistently. Whilst from our point we must say we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10) yet God will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Lord' (Matt. 25:21). Notice in the latter case that those who had done true works had not been conscious of doing them (Matt. 25:31ff.)!

The message of Revelation 14:13 is full of indescribable comfort: 'And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!"' 'That our deeds should follow us, and be of inestimable worth, is a great comfort to God's people. Hence Paul's exhortation, 'let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.'

The rewards will not be novel, garish, or in the nature of foolish trinkets—adornments for our pride—but will be the fruits of character grown and nurtured in suffering, but reaped in the harvest of true glory. the holiness which is wrought by obedience and love. The real dynamic of works is hope— the hope of sharing the glory of God and Christ in us the hope of glory (Rom 5:5, Col 1:27)—because in hope we see the work of creation. redemption and universal

rehabilitation as being completed. As at the beginning we were called to be 'workers together with God,' so now, in the life of holiness, we are called afresh, and at deeper levels, to work with God in the fulfilment of His plan. This is what makes our work imaginative rich, procreative and full of purpose. This is holiness in its richest forms. This is what man—and his life—is all about.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

***THE FRUITS AND ACTIONS  
OF HOLINESS (2)***

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**THE MINISTRY OF PROCLAMATION**

In one sense, holiness is something which happens when we are not particularly occupied with holiness as a thing in itself. It is a spin-off of steady obedience based on the liberating grace of God. We have seen above that works are what God has called us to, and commanded us to do. These works are all in the context of His plan, and not mere arbitrary acts of our own choosing. Richest amongst such planned works is the proclamation of the Gospel.

That Christ has commanded his people to preach the word and teach the churches is not in doubt. The so-called 'great commission' set out in the endings of the four gospels, is, when examined, not so much a basic command, as it is directions for the work of witness and proclamation. The 'Go!' of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 are really participles, so that 'going' is presupposed rather than commanded. It is on the basis of this that Luke 24:45-49 simply says that 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his [Christ's] name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' Likewise in Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples that they will be witnesses to him in all the world when the Spirit has come upon them, bringing his power for that witness. In John

20:19-23, Jesus breathes his Spirit upon the disciples and sends them out 'as the Father has sent me.'

There is, of course, an implied imperative in all these statements. Paul asks of the lost of this world, 'But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:14). He then asks, 'And how can men preach unless they are sent?' No man has the right to go unless he is sent, and when sent has no right to withhold the proclamation of the good news. Paul says, 'For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission' (I Cor. 9:16-17). He is saying that if he goes to preach with a free spirit then it is richly rewarding, but in any case he dare not refrain from preaching since he has been sent. Much of the same idea lies in 11 Corinthians 5:11, 'knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men,' and in 11 Corinthians 5:14, '*the love of Christ constrains us.*' In Romans 1:14-15, he again repeats the twin theme of command and love- constraint: 'I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish: so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.'

If we take Paul as a paradigm for proclaiming the Gospel, we see that (a) he was met sovereignly by Christ, and converted, (b) at his very conversion he was told what he was to do, namely to proclaim the gospel amongst both Jews and Gentiles. Most telling is his statement in Galatians 1:15-16 that God had called him from his mother's womb, and 'was pleased to reveal his Son in [him] *that [he] might preach him among the Gentiles.*' Conversion then is with a view to proclamation. Paul saw his commissioning both as *vision* and *command*. He told his story to King Agrippa (Acts 26

9-23), and concluded, 'Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.' A reading of Acts and the letters of Paul indicate that Paul burned to tell the message of the good news. The fact and cost of this ministry is underlined in many places, eg. Acts 20:17-35, II Cor. 6:3- 10, 4:7-15' 11:21-29.

### OUR MINISTRY OF PROCLAMATION

We are tempted to put Paul in a special box all of his own and think of ourselves in more modest terms. This may appear to have elements of humility, but that is not the case: we are expected to work to capacity, not in some guilt-compulsive frenetic way, but in the way of usefulness and fruitfulness. Guilt-tension will never comport with the freedom of grace which we proclaim, even when we have to warn of judgement in the process of delivering this message of emancipation. Paul could say, without false humility, 'I laboured more than them all' (I Cor. 15:10).

What Paul had in his experience of regeneration we also have in ours. Whilst his case may appear dramatic to us, it does not mean our experienced event of regeneration is any the less in depth and dimensions. In one sense, no soul is less or more sinful than another. In Adam, we are all rebellious and need the same promiscuous grace of God, and likewise His same promiscuous love. The evil we have 'needs all the grace of the Cross to compass it' and destroy it.

When we realise the dimensions of this regenerating miracle then we realise the dimensions of grace. Not' of course, that we ever can fully know the vastness of our own evil or of His goodness; but we know enough to be overwhelmed by grace. It is this sense of being overwhelmed that launches us into telling the good news to others. Like Paul, we see it as both a high honour and a high responsibility. We

too, feel indebted to all men to tell them the amazing news. Evangelism is the overflow of the heart—through the lips and the life. This comes from a heart that is too full to contain it: so it must allow the abundance of the heart to flow out. Some reading these lines, may feel this is far too idealistic, far too emotional, and not ‘earthed’—so to speak. That is not true: when men and women see us intoxicated by the good news they will believe the news is good!

### THE POWER FOR PROCLAMATION

We have seen that the Holy Spirit is the one who effects sanctification in our lives. In him is power for holy living. In him, also, is power for proclamation. The New Testament speaks about the early proclaimers preaching ‘the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.’ Acts 1:8 speaks of the power that comes from the Spirit to enable us to witness, and ‘the witness of Jesus’ in the New Testament is the proclamation of the good news (cf. Rev. 1:2, 9, 6:9, 12:11, 17, 20:4). The Holy Spirit brings his people to the truth, and then into it’ and they’ having revelation of that truth’ can then proclaim it (John 16:12-15’ I John 2:20-21’ 26-27, 11 John 1-2). Paul speaks of the power of the Spirit by which he preached, and he thus expected others to preach in the same way through the aid of the same Spirit (I Cor. 1:17’ 2:1-5 I Thess. 1:5’ 6-10’ cf. Heb. 2:1-4,’ 6:4).

We may then rightly conclude that power for proclamation is not denied to any believer for both holiness and proclamation, seeing it is the Holy Spirit who effects both, and does so simultaneously. By nature of the case it is not functional for him to do one apart from the other. He who proclaims must live in holiness: he who lives in holiness must proclaim. So much does the pursuit of holiness demand the grace of God that the recipient of it must express his surprise

and gratitude by pointing others to that grace, and that is, in fact, proclamation.

### THE GOAL OF PROCLAMATION

God’s compassion for creation and wayward humanity is beyond total telling. Statements such as ‘God so loved’ (John 3:16), ‘If God so loved’ (I John 4:11), ‘God, out of his great love with which he loved us’ (Eph. 2:4), ‘God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace’ (11 Thess. 2:16), indicate something of the dimensions of that compassion. We who believe are the fruits of His compassion: we must tell out that compassion. How can we speak of holiness of heart when we lack such compassion?

Again, the redemption of man has—so to speak—been placed in the hands of man. ‘How shall they hear without a preacher?’ We are intended to be the preachers. Giftwise every one of us may not be an evangelist, but we are all in the business of announcing the good news. If we are the priestly community then we must ‘declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (I Pet. 2:9-10). If we are the prophetic community then we must be witnesses to him in all the world (Acts 1:8, Rev. 19:10, Acts 4:33). If we are the royal community, ‘the sons of the Kingdom’ (Matt. 8:12), then we must proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:24, 25). If we are the ‘sons of the covenant’ (Acts 3:25) then we must proclaim covenant grace (Matt. 26:28, Gal. 3:13-14, Heb. 10:11-18).

### HOLINESS AND PROCLAMATION FULFIL THE PLAN OF GOD

Jesus said. And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached

throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; *and then the end will come* (Matt. 24:14). Co-terminal with the completion of proclamation will be the end, the time when Christ will come in glory and the judgement of all evil will take place including, the judgement of the nations. In a sense the completeness of the church's proclamation will hasten the time of the end' and in a parallel sense Peter says holiness of living will hasten the day of Christ's coming:

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fires (11 Pet. 3:11- 12).

We conclude then that holiness of life' and proclamation of the Gospel of the grace of God' do not proceed apart. Holiness through grace will motivate us to tell of grace, and telling of grace will increase our experience of practical holiness. Holiness and proclamation' then' are both mandatory. Each is supportive of the other.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

***THE HISTORIC BATTLE FOR HOLINESS***

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**THE BATTLE FROM BEGINNING TO END**

God is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, as also the In-Between. He is the Author of all things, and as well the Completer. He has planned the end of our historic time, after which will be eternity. We have seen that at the end time there will be an irreversible reckoning—the judgement of all things. Also we have seen that the present system will be immolated and out of it will emerge the new heavens and the new earth. All who have become new creations through the Cross, through Christ and his Spirit, will inhabit the new creation, ie. the renewed creation. We do not know either the matter or manner of the purifying immolation (II Pet. 3:10f.), but that does not matter. Nothing happens at the end which is accidental or arbitrary. God never plays His history 'off the cuff.'

We saw that one of the things which God purposed was that His children would be before Him, 'holy and without blemish.' This is what Christ has planned for his Bride the Church' 'having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present [her] to himself in splendour' without spot or wrinkle or any such thing' that she might be holy and without blemish.' So much for that: both the creation and God's people will be holy in the end time, prepared for a pure eternity.

### THE HISTORIC BATTLE FOR THE HOLY CONSUMMATION

In our past half-dozen chapters or so' we have studied the battle which persons have in seeking to live the life of holiness. We have seen the enemies of man, and the subtle ways they use in an attempt to prise him away from obedience to God. We cannot fully understand that battle unless we see it in perspective, ie. in the total battle of God against Satan and of good against evil, and in the eschatological triumph of the Godhead, as holiness is the established order, forever.

### THE BATTLE FOR CREATION

Man is tempted from the beginning. The serpent seeks to bring mankind into his bondage, to serve him. He seems to win in the first temptation, but is told that God will raise up the seed of woman which will crush him under its heel (Gen. 3:15). Yet in the birth of Cain we see the genesis of 'the children of the devil' (I John 3:10f.). Cain's hatred of Abel because of envy causes him to murder his brother. Violence thus has its genesis in human history.

Without doubt, history is the backwards and forwards movement of good and evil. From Cain's time and action, violence spreads across the face of the earth. This necessitates the Flood. The Flood is not an attempt to rinse evil from the earth, but to bring judgement upon it for its evil. Man must be judged. The grace that God exhibits towards Noah and his children has to cover the deceitfulness of the human heart. Doubtless Noah was a preacher of righteousness, but evil was still resident in his family. Ham' the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father' Noah' as he lay in a drunken slumber. Whatever was the wrong of doing this, and reciting the incident to his brothers Shem and

Japheth, we do not rightly know. We do know, however, that Canaan is shown as a deeply idolatrous people, and in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament, demonolatry and idolatry are closely linked (cf. Deut. 29:16-21, 32:16-22, 1 Cor. 10:18-22).

### THE BATTLE AND COVENANT

Covenant is God's way of grace with man, especially sinful man. In God's covenant with Abraham, the term 'seed' (cf. Gen. 3:15) appears again (eg. 12:7, 13:15, 17:8). Through this 'seed' shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Again the battle of evil appears. Paul speaks of it in Galatians 4:21 -31. He shows that Ishmael, Abraham's first son by a slave-concubine, was of the flesh, and sought to persecute Isaac. Of Isaac's two sons, Esau is what may be called 'a natural man,' and Jacob—for all his faults—has his eyes set on God.

The covenant comes into full flush with the children of Israel (Jacob's children), especially centuries later when Moses leads them to the Promised Land. They are tested in the wilderness as to idolatry, and this is where Satan has a great triumph. From that point onwards Israel never ceases to be caught in the battle between God and the idols. Stephen, in his sermon before the Jewish Sanhedrin, has much to say about this, ie. that idolatry was always in the heart of the nation (cf. Acts 7:35-53). The Old Testament is filled with this struggle, involving all the facets of law and the prophets. The nation, after much suffering, looks to the coming of the Mighty Intervener about whom Isaiah 59 speaks strongly.

### THE BATTLE AND THE NEW COVENANT

Much of the Old Testament can only be understood in the light of the coming and events of Christ. The Gospels tell us

of his unceasing battle with Satan. Christ is the True Intervener, the Stronger-than-the-Strong-Man. Many Scriptures —most of which we have already quoted in this present book—tell us of the strong work of demons at the time of Christ. They oppress human beings and at times possess them. By sicknesses, diseases, mental troubles and the like, they demean humanity which was made in the image of God. It is no wonder that Christ finds steady opposition as he preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom. His crucifixion by ‘the princes of this world’ (I Cor. 2:8, cf. Eph. 6:12) is an attempt by evil to destroy Christ: indeed he said it was their hour and authority (Luke 22:53). Even so, it was really his hour of triumph (John 12:31, 14:30-31, 16:11, Heb. 2:14-15, Col. 2:14-15). With his death all evil is, in essence, defeated.

All this is because of Christ’s covenant action: ‘for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’

### THE BATTLE AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost’ the battle is no less. In the Book of the Acts, we see many attempts to defeat the Gospel, to drive a wedge between the people of God, to destroy the churches. First Ananias and Sapphira let Satan put it in their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). In the love-distribution to those in need, there is another attempt to break the fellowship: Hebrew and overseas widows have a quarrel. This is defeated by the Spirit. In chapters 6 and 7, we see the attempt of the church’s enemies to destroy the powerful debater, Stephen. From then on it is persecution that comes out into the open. The persecution of the church must be seen as nothing other than a Satanic attack upon it. This attack comes sometimes from within it,

and sometimes from outside.

Most of the epistles of the New Testament were written either to counter evil where it was gaining ground within the church, or to teach and train in spiritual warfare. The churches’ failures can be seen in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, where Christ points out the shortcomings of the churches, the involvement they have with immorality and the occult, to say nothing of their loss of love, party-divisions, and the like.

### THE BATTLE AND THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

In the gospels and the epistles, quite a lot is spoken concerning future events. The church itself is to be the prophetic community, and so the Book of the Revelation is a boon to the churches in every century, for it spells out the nature of the conflict which faces the people of God. The operations of the great dragon, ‘that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan’ are many’ and for the most part brilliant. The churches have already been made aware of ‘Satan’s devices,’ but since he is a liar from the beginning, cannot speak the truth, and goes out to deceive the nations by every means within his power’ then the churches have to be vigilant’ sober’ always on the alert’ steadfast in the faith and walking in the Spirit. These latter statements are not emptily pious. The church faces unceasing warfare and must become adept, not only in countering evil, but in attacking it aggressively and defeating it.

The great dragon brings to birth the beast who is his agent. Then another beast arises who is linked with the image of the first beast, and is often seen as the false prophet. We see a dynamic hierarchy of evil in action’ and alongside this militant and totalitarian dictatorship is also the harlot’

the unholy city of Babylon. She has cultural, political and materialistic overtones. She appeals by her seductive commerce to the nations of the world who adore her.

Man is then beset around with both threatening and seductive forces. These all epitomise, indeed actualise the impurity and uncleanness of the world-system of evil. We must recognise that they are Satan's attempts to draw mankind into polluted living.

The 'Lamb-as-it-were-had-been-slain' (AV) is the person and force which counters all evil. Because of his victory at the Cross and Resurrection, and because he is ascended and is in session at the right hand of God, he can set about to destroy evil. He opens the book of history, loosing seven seals of judgements which give way to seven trumpets of judgements, which in turn are linked with seven bowls of wrath. The creation and all its creatures is subject to these successive and enlarging forms of punishment.

#### THE ULTIMATE BATTLE: THE FINAL VICTORY

Babylon, falling before the judgement of God, is greatly mourned. Its demise unsettles the universe. Following the victory of the marriage of the Bride (the church) and the Lamb (Christ the Bridegroom), heavenly warfare takes place and Christ rides forth to conquer.<sup>7</sup> In this battle the beast, the false prophet, and all who follow them are

<sup>7</sup> In the Book of the Revelation, times and place sequences are not easy to follow. In Rev. 16:12-16, there is a story of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet summoning forth for the 'battle on the great day of God,' and the place is called Armageddon. In 19:11-21, the battle is fought against the beast with the kings of the earth and their armies, and here they are defeated and punished. In 20:7-10, it seems the great battle mentioned as coming in Revelation 12 to 16 now takes place. Whether this may be rightly called 'Armageddon' does not matter. Is the battle in 19:17-21 in fact the same battle? It is difficult to say. The main point is that Christ and his powers fight Satan and his, on whatever front happens to be immediate, and evil *always fails*.

destroyed. Following the intervention of the millennium, the forces of Gog and Magog gather together, and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city, to bring about great destruction. But fire comes down from heaven and consumes them. Now the devil is thrown into the lake of fire to join the beast and the false prophet.

The final picture of the defeat of evil is the judgement held at the great white throne:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death (21:8).

In just a few paragraphs we have compassed the mighty battle that takes place between Pentecost and the final judgement. This battle is summarised in I Corinthians 15:24- 28:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 'For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection under him,' it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him that God may be everything to every one.

The vast expenditure of power, of love' of patience and

endurance, cannot be easily encompassed in human writing or human recording. It takes in millions of hours, endless fountains of tears, unbelievable human energies, wastages, traumas and hurts, to say nothing of the healings of grace, and the dynamic achievements of holiness. Whether the battles described above happen simply at a point (or, points) of time is not wholly relevant. It is the fact that the battle is constant and unremitting which takes our attention. We are in that battle *now* and nothing in it is insignificant. 'Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart' (Gal. 6:9).

**'HE THAT ENDURETH UNTO THE END  
SHALL BE SAVED'**

This was a statement made by our Lord not once, but twice (Matt. 10:22, 24:13). We may say that only he who is saved 'would endure unto the end. This 'end' is the *telos*, the completion or summation of history. Christ is with us for that end—that it may be consummated: 'Lo! I am with you to the end [*telos*] of the age.'

What tribulations there are when we really fight the battle! All the fury of evil is intent and bent upon seeing that God's vindication of holiness does not prove triumphant. If we did not have the truth of the endurance of the saints, then we would be deeply troubled and afraid. Some speak of the perseverance, some of the preservation of the saints, but probably the endurance of the saints is a better statement. They endure because God is working in them 'both to will and to do his good purpose.'

There is no need for us, here, to repeat what we have already spoken of concerning the spiritual battle. It is just that we need to keep the perspective that our battle is corporate rather than private and of individual nature. In

spiritual warfare we are a spiritual army, not single persons on reconnaissance, or fighting singly body to body. Paul admonishes 'that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.'

**THE FORCES FOR US IN THE BATTLE**

They are God Himself Father, Son and Spirit, and also the holy angels who are 'ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation' (Heb. 1:14' cf. Psa. 34:7). This is the power that works both towards us and in us (Eph. 1:19, 3:20). We 'get strong in the Lord,' and 'can do all things in Christ,' and 'are more than conquerors through him who loved us.' These statements may mean little more to us than idle recitations, until we are confronted with the reality and even the terror of spiritual combat.

Every saint goes through that exercise from time to time when he groans at the thoughts he (she) can have, the uprising of old flesh, old man, old habits. At such times, he wonders whether anything has really happened: talk of regeneration and sanctification seems unreal. Yet there is strength for him, and it lies in the promises of God, that whilst we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, He is working within; that He who called us is faithful, and that He will go on working right up until the day of Jesus Christ.

For some, the awesome account of Romans 8:26-39 is of the greatest comfort: nothing quite equals it. Paul has just been talking about the whole creation convulsed in suffering. The physical creation looks to its liberation from point

less futility, into useful, functional purpose and meaning. The believer groans, wanting the new body, the situation when he will be free from temptation and the accusing voice within. Even now he is very weak, despairing of making sense Of anything and of being able to pray intelligibly' Then it is he becomes awed: he is told that the Spirit within him is praying for him' interceding for him 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.' He knows this must be authentic and powerful intercession. He is amazed and humbled at the Spirit's identification with him and his needs.

Again he is told that God does not so much intercede for him as that He directly confronts those who accuse him, God's child. 'Why!' God says, 'I myself have justified him. Who then can lay anything in the nature of a charge against My own elect?'

The Son has died for us, not only to bring us to justification, and so, to holiness. He, being risen' is at the right hand of God. He is now interceding, not that God may receive us—for He has already done that—but as the Mighty Person of Isaiah 59 who is the Intervener, who dons his effective armour, who equips himself with his powerful weapons, and who is now terrible in his zeal to intervene between his people and their dread rapacious enemies—be those enemies morally evil, and maliciously brutal or devilishly clever, subtle, cunning and seductive.

We seem to live in enormous ignorance of the machinations of evil, of the compulsive evil of Satan and his minions. We are used to skulduggery and cunningly contrived plans in the political realms of life, for politics infect everything we do, and are not confined to governmental circles. We can thus, through taking such things for granted, easily miss the fact that lethal evil seeks to get us into its sights and destroy us. We say it reverently that the powers of God—Father, Son, Spirit, and the vast angelic hosts—are keeping the children of faith from being destroyed or

destroying themselves. If the Father were not Affirmer of us, and the Son Intervener' then we might die in despair, we might shrivel away in the fierce immolation which would come upon us; or we might just dehydrate as persons, becoming non- combative, dry, mediocre, bland and soul-less.

In fact the battle, if fully seen, could be so terrifying as to paralyse us; if not seen, then so dangerous as to unarm us. If it were not for the red-blooded prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Day of the Lord, and the apocalyptic passages in the Gospels, Paul, Peter and Jude, then we could live in supine ignorance of the terrible conflict. If it were not for the rich and powerful prophecy of the Revelation, then we could not understand—and so unmask and counter—the dreadful and knavish manipulations of the .Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet and the Scarlet Woman. Even having these prophecies in our hands and minds' we often remain partly ignorant of the vast dimensions of the evil forces pitted against us. If Christ were not Intervener at the right hand of God, if he were not 'the true and faithful witness,' 'the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead' and the ruler of kings on earth,' 'the King of kings and Lord of lords,' 'the Alpha and the Omega;' the one who is called 'faithful and True' [who] in righteousness judges and makes war,' and who is called 'the Word of God,' ie. the One seated on the white horse who goes forth to battle with the armies of darkness, then we would be pitifully exposed,. cruelly beaten, and hopelessly destroyed. This is the battle that the people of God fight every day. Indeed,

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness' or peril; or swords As it is written, 'For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities. nor things present, nor things to come, nor*

powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

We conclude then that evil is rampant in God's universe, on the one hand cunningly contriving to use the great weapons of guilt, fear of death, promises of pleasure, and enticements of power to unseat us, and on the other hand, unbridled in its polluting vandalism of God's holy creation. This makes us thrilled to cry, 'If God be for us' who can be against us?' and it gives us rich reassurance to know that 'Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life' (II Cor. 2:14- 16).

If, in humility, we place ourselves under the almighty hand of God, then we can face such forces as we are kept by that Hand. Even so, we must not underestimate their ruthless nature, and their compulsive drive to unseat even God from His throne. It is in 'fear and trembling' that we go about our holy living. It is not fear of Satan and trembling because of evil. It is a holy fear and trembling, fitting to our knowledge of the Holy One of Israel' the Holy Father of His true people.

We are part of all His salvation history' the vindication of His Holy Name, and the triumph of history as planned' led, and fulfilled by Him. The wonderful reward? That we have come through much tribulation and have made our robes white in the blood of the Lamb, that we may worship Him in His holy temple, day and night—forever. The reward and the grand inheritance is that, as sons of God who are like the Son of God, we shall be kings and priests unto our God' and that as His holy people, we shall reign forever.

The Bride will be holy, the Holy Bridegroom will wed her'

and bring God into indissoluble unity with His purified people. This is the great promise and this will be the truth of all eternity.

## APPENDIX ONE

***THE PURE HEART. GIFT AND DILEMMA*****INTRODUCTION: REVIEW OF THE HEART BOTH PURE AND IMPURE**

In Chapters 12 to 14, we looked closely at the need for the pure heart in man. We saw its breakdown, from its original purity, into a heart which had become the fountain of impurity, and which had at the same time become ‘deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt.’ Jesus said that what came out of man’s heart defiled him. The writer of Hebrews stated that a person can come to ‘an evil heart of unbelief.’

We also saw that because man was made in the image of God, a pure heart is functionally indispensable to him: no matter how alienated from God he becomes, he always feels the shame of his impurity and instinctively knows he would be happier with a pure heart. However, he is so far gone in sin that this desire is not pursued. Israel, because it was God’s covenant people and a holy nation, was morally bound to seek the pure heart, and to live as a pure people before its covenant Father-God. In the case of David, whose life had become most impure, there was confrontation by the prophet Nathan with an instant and terrifying revelation of the king’s evil. David told God that his sin was primarily against Him, that God required truth in the inward parts—in the secret heart—and the penitent king pleaded for a pure heart. Later the same king was able to say, ‘the Lord rewarded me

according to my righteousness; according to *the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.*’ To this he added, ‘with the pure thou shalt show thyself pure’ (11 Sam. 22:21, 27).

A pure heart, then, was known in the Old Testament (Psa. 51:10, 24:4). It was a ‘circumcised’ heart (Deut. 30:6), and one which was obedient. A reading of Psalm 119 shows the obedient, loving and fervent nature of the heart (see verses 2, 10, 11, 32, 34, 36, 58, 69, 80, 111, 112, 145 and 161). The sad history of Israel is one of its continuing idolatry, and its failure to be the pure people it was commanded to be. Judgements had to come, time and again ‘to the nation’ even to the point of the dispersal of the tribes and banishment from Palestine into exile. Even the exiles who returned suffered greatly at the hands of other nations. At the core of the people was a holy remnant, and their longing was for the pure heart. In passages such as Ezekiel 36:24-28, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Isaiah 4:4 ‘and other places’ God promised a new life of holiness to His people. They were to be given ‘the pure heart.’

**THE PURE HEART IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

In this review of Chapters 12 to 14, we see further that the pure heart is a fact in the New Testament. Jesus says that the pure in heart are blessed because they will see God (Matt. 5:8). Paul says that to the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure (Titus 1:15). He speaks of the pure heart as a fact, saying, ‘the aim of our charge is love which issues from a pure heart’ (I Tim. 1:5). He speaks of Christ purifying a people for himself (Titus 2:14), and says that Christ and the Holy Spirit have ‘washed. . . sanctified. . . [and] justified’ those who were living in various forms of evil (I Cor. 6:11). He himself had been told at his conversion to be baptised, ‘washing away

your sins' (Acts 22:16). Peter wrote of 'Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth' (I Pet. 1:22), and doubtless he remembered at this point the Gentiles to whom he had spoken, of whom later he had said, 'the Holy Spirit. . . cleansed their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:8-10). The writer of Hebrews protests that mere animal blood could not effect moral cleansing, but that the perfect sacrifice of Christ had done this (Heb. 10:1-4). He adds, 'let us draw near . . . with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience' (v. 22).

This pure heart is generally known as the regenerated heart, and since the heart really stands for the whole being of a person, it parallels or equals the new creation (II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15); to be a new creation means the person has been born again. This new birth and the cleansing of the heart seem simultaneously effected by the Holy Spirit in the statement, 'the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5).

Whilst this new heart—this being of the new creation—is a gift of grace, yet a response is demanded. James speaks to Christians and says, 'Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind' (James 4:8b). Paul talks of a person purifying himself and thus being with those 'who call upon the Lord from a pure heart' (11 Tim. 2:20-22). This approximates to God's demand of Israel, 'get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!' (Ezek. 18:31).

#### **GOD INDWELLS THE PURE HEART**

We need now to see the holy nature of this new heart. It is indwelt by God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John 14:15-23 makes the point that the Holy Spirit 'dwells with you and will be in you.' Jesus adds, 'In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' He says, further, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my

Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' In his first epistle, John speaks of God abiding in us, and of us abiding in Him (I John 3:24, 4:13, 16). Paul likewise speaks of Christ dwelling in us (Eph. 3:17, Rom. 8:9-11, Gal. 2:20, Col. 1:27), and Peter says, 'in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord' (I Pet. 3:15). Paul and John both speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Paul: 11 Cor. 1:22, 11 Tim. 1:14, Rom. 5:5, 8:9-11, 26-27; John: 1 John 3:24, 4:13). In relation to the Father indwelling man, Jesus speaks of the Spirit of the Father in His people (Matt. 10:19-20), which is as good as saying that the Father dwells in them, for the Son only dwells in believers through the Spirit. It must also be observed that to have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwell in us, then we necessarily dwell in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

#### **THE INDWELLING AND THE PURE HEART**

All we have said above and in Chapters 12 to 14 leads us to see that the pure heart is made pure firstly by the objective purifying act of God through the Cross, and the coming and applicatory work of the Holy Spirit. It is kept pure by the indwelling of the Godhead. Doubtless, too, it is also kept pure by the cleansing of God. John says, 'the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin' (I John 1:7), which is tantamount to another statement by him: 'if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins' (I John 2:1). Cleansing blood and present propitiation are really the one thing.

#### **THE PURE LONGINGS OF THE PURE HEART**

We saw that many in Israel had pure heart. Christ indicates that he was speaking to some who had such hearts. He could

say of Nathaniel, ‘an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!’ (John 1:47). The apostles also speak of this pure heart. Because of the atoning work of Christ and the indwelling by the Godhead, man may continue to have a pure heart, a good heart, a guileless heart. No true believer will want to deny that he has continual longings for utter holiness, for purity of mind and spirit. The heart that pants after the waterbrooks is a symbol of the man who thirsts for God, the living God (Psa. 42:1-3). The psalmist cries, ‘O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee’ (63:1), and in another place almost repeats the words: ‘My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God’ (84:2). It is the heart of the beautiful beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11. It is ‘the secret heart,’ ‘the inner parts,’ ‘the inward man,’ ‘the whole heart.’ It is the essential man, it is the true new man, the new creation. It surely is enough to send a person into delirious joy. In fact it is in this heart that the fruit of the Spirit is received (Rom. 5:5, Gal. 5:22-23), experienced and then manifested to the world, for it is ‘out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.’

#### HOW IS IT THAT THE PERSON OF THE PURE HEART CAN (AND DOES) SIN?

James raises the question, in 3:1-18. The thrust of his passage is: ‘It is true that we all make mistakes, otherwise we would be perfect. The tongue seems to be our problem expressing what is in our hearts. From us, as people of God, only sweetness should issue and not bitterness. How can *both* issue from the one source? Nothing good will come unless it issues from “the meekness of wisdom.” If, however, you have “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts,” then you need—for this heart—the “wisdom

from above.” That will be “‘first pure’ then peaceable’ gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity.” ‘

James is telling us that it is a contradiction of the pure heart to have in it things which are not of peace and purity but things which are ‘full of deadly poison.’ We must then recognise that the heart, whilst made pure by God, can still be laid open by us to other influences. We have to realise that *these elements are foreign to the heart as the pure heart*. If we understand the heart to be the whole of the human person—his will, intelligence and affections—then we will recognise that *the human person is fighting adverse elements*’ things foreign to him as a new creation’ but able to penetrate, especially where there is ignorance of the nature of evil, its threatenings’ deceivings and its seducings.

#### Romans 7 and the Law

In Chapters 24 to 29 we have seen the problems the believer has with the law. He desires to do good but is prevented by a law which inevitably goes into operation whenever he tries. That law simply is that, when he tries to do good, sin is present with him to prevent him. The same law applies when he wishes to desist from evil: sin draws him into evil. He protests that this is not his mind (*nous*’ ie. attitude’ intelligence and thrust)’ for he delights in the law of God after the inward man. Sin of itself is stronger than he is of himself. Romans 8 makes it clear that what he cannot do in his own strength he certainly can do in the power of the Holy Spirit. Even so’ this demonstrates the fact that ‘in me [ie. *of myself* dwells no good thing.’ At the same time, *sin does dwell in my flesh*, ie. my humanity as conditioned by sin’ my innate weakness as a creature of God.

What we have to determine is whether this sin which dwells in me who has the pure heart is *an inmate* in that pure

heart, or is *innate* to it. It appears that Paul sees it as *an innate* but not as *innate*. He says, 'It is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells in me' (Rom. 7:17). He thus divorces sin as being foreign to him, and not intrinsically part of him. He recognises he will have the powerful pressure of sin as long as he lives in the body and so feel himself to be a 'wretched man.' He knows that ultimately he will be delivered from this stress by death and resurrection. Even so, he can still cry 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1). In this sense he knows that his heart rests on the justificatory grace of God. It does not cease to be a pure heart because it is subject to sin's pressures. The thought he pursues in Romans 8 is that through the Spirit, in fact and in deed, he can 'put to death the deeds of the body.'

### Colossians 3: Mortification and Vivification

In Chapters 30 and 31, we saw the principles of mortification and vivification. The parallel passage of Ephesians 4:17-31 also illustrates the same principles. We do find evil trying to establish itself in us, and trying to manipulate us into practising sin. Paul tells us that because we have died with Christ and risen again, then these evil elements are foreign to our new position in Christ, our new life in him. We must therefore put to death things which are wrong: we must put them off, or put them away. In their place, we must give life to the things which are good, putting them on. We have learned the truth of Christ, the truth as it is in Christ, and we are people of the truth. It is as James' saying, 'do not . . . be false to the truth.'

Such passages establish the fact that evil is foreign to the gift of the new heart, ie. it is as *an innate*, but not *innate*. Even in the face of Romans 7:14 ('We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin'), the truths, that

we are delivered from sin, are not to be negated. We have a new pure heart, we are indwelt by the Persons of the Godhead, we have a good conscience and a sincere faith, we have been forgiven' cleansed, regenerated and sanctified. Yes, we must insist upon these facts. We must also insist that Romans 7:14 essentially exists alongside these facts, and that the heart of the new man can be subject to all kinds of evil. He can and does sin even in the face of the statement:

'No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God' (I John 3:9).

We will look at this latter statement, yet we must insist that, contrary to having a pure heart, we do commit sin and impurity. That is why mortification and vivification are to be practised. The marvel is that we *can* practise them.

### The Puzzle of Sinning and Not Sinning

We can now look at I John 3:9<sup>8</sup>. The perfectionist interpretation is that the person born of God is incapable of

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<sup>8</sup> I John 3:9 states. 'No one born of God commits sin; for God's [Gk.: hi nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.] An alternative reading is, 'for the offspring of God abide in him, and they cannot sin because they are born of God.' Twice it is categorically stated that the person born again *cannot* sin. Does this mean he is incapable of sinning? If so, then it scarcely needs to be said. At the same time it must be emphasised that sinning, as a way of life, is impossible to the new person. In this context F. F Bruce says, 'One way or another the new birth involves a radical change of human nature; for those who have not experienced it, sin is natural, whereas for those who have experienced it, sin is unnatural—so unnatural indeed. that its practice constitutes a powerful refutation of any claim to possess the divine life. John's antitheses are clear-cut: any attempt to make them less sharp and uncompromising than they are is to misinterpret them' (*The Epistles of John*, Pickering and Inglis, London, 1970, p. 92). Some commentators (cf. NIV. 'will continue to sin . . . cannot go on sinning') point to the present continuous tense as though it means 'does not habitually go on sinning.' This weakens the thrust of the verse, and leaves it open to spasmodic sin as against no sin. Again we need to look back to the contrast of those born of God and those not born of God. Whilst admitting the fact that believers sin, we should nevertheless see it as a contradictory happening in the light of the new birth, and the 'seed' remaining in the new-born.

sinning, ie. 'It is impossible to sin.' Anyone making such an absolutist statement is immediately faced with problems when, in fact, he does sin. Those who hold to the doctrine of 'sinless perfection' must then say that any act they do, which appears to be sin in the eyes of others cannot actually be sin, since sinning is impossible. Thus even adultery cannot be said to be adultery, but has some explanation which takes it out of the category of adultery. It would be impossible to hold to such a viewpoint.

The exegesis of this verse is proverbially difficult. The way we *would* see it naturally affects the way we *do* see it. If the verse is set back into its immediate context and at the same time in the full context of the epistle, then it is fairly simple. In the whole epistle, John speaks of what happens when a person is born of God: he loves, knows God (4:7), he believes (5:1), overcomes the world (5:4), and does not sin (3:9, 5:18). In one sense each of these is an absolute: in another sense each one has to be battled out, ie. achieved in the light of promise, and with the aid of the Word, the Spirit, the Father. In 3:6, the one who *abides in God* does not sin. He who *has seen God* does not sin. Thus one needs to see God, to abide in Him, and to have His seed (Word, life-principle, Spirit) in him for the purposes of not sinning. The wider context of the letter also makes it clear that one cannot say he has no sin (1:8): but *if he sins* then the propitiation stands him in good stead; he needs the blood to go on cleansing (2:1, 1:7). Further, being a child of God with the hope of future purity, he 'purifies himself as He is pure' (3:3). All of this shows us that an absolutist, perfectionist understanding of 3:9 is impossible.

In the local context of the passage, John is contrasting two sets of people: those who are of the Devil, and those who are of God. Those who are of the Devil do not have truth, since Satan was always a liar. Those who are of the Devil do not practise righteousness nor love the brethren:

those who are of God do righteousness and love the brethren. In other words, there are two sets of humanity, one being for sin' and the other against it. He is saying in general (as well as in particular) terms that those born of God do not sin' ie. sin is not their thrust and general habit. Those who are not born of God do sin, and that is their general thrust. The believers have God's *seed* in them, and the others have the Devil's *seed* in them. Ephesians 2:1-3 with I John 5:19 show how the Devil energises his children, and Ephesians 3:20' 6:10 and Philippians 2:12-13 show how God energises His.

So our enquiry into this passage enables us to say that the believer certainly has a pure heart, but it does not, in any absolutist, perfectionist sense, mean that *he does not sin*. It may mean that it is possible *not to sin*, but certainly not that *it is impossible to sin*. We have seen that the elements which are conducive to not sinning are 'abiding in Him,' having God's *seed* abiding in him, and perhaps 'purifying himself' (3:6, 3:9, 3:3). The pure heart remains the pure heart, but it will be the target of all forms of evil.

#### Galatians 5:16-26

This passage is enlightening, as to the nature and functioning of the pure heart. Galatians 5:16-18 shows that the lust of the flesh can be all-consuming for any human being, and the only way to be delivered or held back from such is for the believer to (a) walk by the Spirit, and (b) be led by the Spirit. It is not that the believer's 'flesh' and 'spirit' are clashing, fighting each other, but it is the Holy Spirit fighting the flesh (even in the believer), and the flesh seeking to overcome the Holy Spirit in order to overcome the believer. To give way to the flesh will be to do the works of the flesh' and to be led by (walk in) the Spirit is to live in the goodness of the fruit of the Spirit. The new man is not dichotomous,

and so' schizophrenic. Rather, he is one person who is the battleground of two powerful influences, namely flesh as a powerful principle, and the Spirit as the true power both of creation and redemption. One can live with the pure heart if one is 'in the Spirit' (Rom. 8:9-11).

#### The *Paraenetic* Passages of the New Testament

By the word *paraenesis*, we mean the passages which exhorts, ie. the hortatory passages. These are many in the New Testament. All the writers of the letters exhort, and readers are also exhorted to exhort! Hebrews 3:12-13 exhorts us to exhort one another daily, for fear one may come into hardness of heart, the heart of unbelief. Hebrews 10:24 speaks of provoking one another to love and good works. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 demand that in worship—in the very singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—we address each other with exhortation and admonishment.

In other words, *the pure heart is not free-standing*. Why is this? It is because 'none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself . . . we are the Lord's, (Rom. 14:7-8). It is because anyone who thinks he stands (of himself) must beware lest he fall (of himself, I Cor. 10:12f.). It is because having died to sin we live to God, but to none other (Rom. 14:8,11 Cor. 5:15).

The heart then is not free-standing. It is required to abide in God, to be energised by God, to have His *seed* remaining in it. One is required to sanctify Christ in the heart (I Pet.:15), to walk in Christ as when one had received him (Col. 2:6ff.), and also to add virtue upon virtue so that growth is ensured and election confirmed. Even when virtue is supplied to, and upon, other virtues, yet these have all been given by grace, even previous to our conscious appropriation of them. The passage of 11 Peter 1:3-12 is a very beautiful explication of what we have been saying:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things are your, and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these things is blind and short-sighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

#### Conclusion as to Sinning and Not Sinning

The key to solving our puzzle must lie in the fact of man not being a free-standing creature' for he is wholly contingent upon God for his being and his actions. This is by reason of the fact that he is a creature' created by God. Many times we have pointed to Jeremiah 10:23' 'I know' O Lord' that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.' We must see that whilst man has been given a will to make his choices, yet he cannot stand alone in them. He may think he is totally free in his choosing, but this is not the case. He is powerfully influenced by so much within himself and outside himself. In practice, he seems free to make his own choices, but Jesus said that the person who sins becomes the slave of sin, in which case there is no true freedom of choice.

More than this, we see that all the forces and influences of evil beset every human creature, whether they know that, or

are blinded by the deceit of it into thinking they are personally free. So then, man is contingent upon God to have biological life, to have gifts which will aid him to live, whilst at the same time being God's enemy. In another sense, he is dependent upon evil to work in him (Eph. 2:1-3, I John 5:19). Paul says, 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.' The word 'work' here can be translated as 'energising': sinful man is energised by Satan. In Philippians 2:12-13, the same thought is present in regard to God energising His children. Man, whether sinful or not, is a contingent creature, and cannot stand alone. Jesus said that no man can serve two masters. James said, 'A double-minded [two-hearted] man is unstable in all his ways!' Man 'not created free-standing' must depend on someone or something. He must serve one master or be confused and bewildered in an intolerable manner.

#### EVIL AN ORGANISED HIERARCHY OF TYRANNY

In seeking to live the life of holiness' we may recognise our many enemies such as sin' Satan, the principalities and powers' the world' the flesh and death. However' when we seek to fight them' or protect ourselves from them' we think of them as separate and distinct enemies' where, in fact' they are a closely-knit entity' a phalanx of evil seeking corporately to destroy us. Thus when in Romans 7 Paul speaks of the action of sin in using the law to cause us to sin, there is behind this sin-action the action of flesh, the world, Satan and his evil powers. Hence the battle is fierce; the foe is deadly; evil is unremitting in its implacable intention to destroy. It might seem then that the task is impossible' but this is not the case.

There are many things in favour of keeping the pure heart

steady in its integrity. The **first** is that *evil is not freestanding either*. Evil could not exist unless there were the good. Evil accomplishes absolutely nothing in the ultimate. All its energies and workings bring nothing about which is truth, and which thus has reality. Only God is free-standing: hence evil can accomplish nothing.

The **second** thing about evil is that it has been defeated at the Cross where the destruction of man's guilt and pollution has been effected.

The **third** matter is that by Christ, the Spirit and the Father, along with the Word, man—even in this life—can triumph over every form of evil. Passages such as Romans 6:12-14, 8:31-39, Colossians 3:1-15, Philippians 1:27-28, I John 2:12-14, 4:4, 5:4, Ephesians 6:10-18 and Revelation 12:10ff., make it clear that evil cannot defeat the children of God or befoul the pure heart. The exhortation to overcome, as in the seven letters contained in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, show that triumph is possible, even in the midst of a fierce battle with evil. However much flesh and sin may indwell the believer, the believer does not have their mind-set. Evil is not intrinsic to him: it is not innate even though it may—in its various forms—be inmate. *As inmate*, it may appear to be *innate* (and who can deny this is how it appears to be?), yet the person of the pure heart can battle in all God's powers and emerge—in all these things—as more than conqueror!

## APPENDIX TWO

***PERSPECTIVE OF HOLINESS***

Our method in writing this book has been to set out various aspects of holiness, ie. God as holy, man as created so but become unholy by the Fall, the results of this fall and the need of man in order to escape from his own impurity. Redeemed through Christ, man still faces the need to be holy in the practice of life. What it means to him now, how he can effect it, and what will be the ultimate outcome of holiness, all embrace many aspects of the subject. Doubtless my mind, and writing, has wandered into too many bypaths and has involved too many side issues. In an endeavour to cover the whole subject so that prior material may be seen in its correct perspective, I have sought, below, to give some panoramic view of the vast issue of sanctification. It may prove useful in gaining some overview of the subject.

**THE HISTORY AND PURSUIT OF HOLINESS**

God is holy: man must be holy because he is in the image of God. He must emanate the given holiness of God. Guilt is what defiles a man, guilt of disobedience. The original sin is principal, unrepeatably, but closely imitated. Man's heart, from being a sparkling fountain, becomes a sluggish effluent of impurity. Man faces the terror of his conscience, the shame of his heart, the depravity of his mind.

God is sovereign in His choice of human creatures: He elects them to holiness, whether a patriarch here, a nation such as Israel there, or His true, new people of Christ's church. The road is long between patriarch and apostle: it requires covenant both universal and particular: it is for Abraham and his great family, as for Jacob and his lesser family. Election draws from all the races: God leaves none without a witness. Israel, however, is special: it has everything—'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises,' and then—above all things—'the Messiah.'

The holy nation shows itself to be most unholy, but the prophets are told God's purposes which are to be achieved through it: and they are achieved, generally in history, particularly in Christ. The Holy One of God comes with the promised redemption: in him, God, as Father, takes the initiative. He redeems man through Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Particularly it is the death-resurrection event which effects the following: (a) the forgiveness of sins; (b) the cleansing of guilt and pollution from the heart, mind, and spirit of a man; (c) the justification of the guilty ungodly, through grace and the instrument of faith, and (d) the sanctifying of the (now) faithful by His elect plan for glorification.

We can see this in a little more detail if we consider the **six** sections below.

1. Redemption embraces justification, forgiveness, purification, and sanctification. One cannot be present without the other. Faith is the means whereby these gifts are received, and faith arises from the revelation God gives of His grace in the person and work of Christ. The agent of this revelation is the Holy Spirit, by whom the word of truth is uttered.
2. The atonement effects the defeat of all evil—Satan, the principalities and powers which are fallen and evil, the world

- system (of which Satan is the prince and which works by its self-seeking wisdom), the flesh, and death (which is God's judgement upon man's initial rebellion and continuing sinning)—and so releases the person who has faith, from the judgement of the law, the justifiable wrath of God, and the tyranny of his own conscience.
3. Since the power of the Cross delivers man from guilt, he is now no longer under the direct power of sin. This deliverance is his defence against evil. He has been given a new (pure) heart which, whilst it is not proof against sinning, has its mind set against evil, and for obedience. The heart can be temporarily deceived (Heb. 3:13), seduced (11 Cor. 11:3, 12-15), and *of itself* is not proof against sin, particularly in the light of the demands of obedience of the law (Rom. 7:14-25). It is, however, able to refuse sin's domination through grace (Rom. 6:12-14) because of justification (Rom. 6:7), ie. because the penalty of the law has been remitted and sin has power through guilt (I Cor. 15:55- 56).
  4. It is necessary for the believer to yield himself to God, and become the slave of righteousness (Rom. 6:15-19, cf. 12:1-2). The believer, by the power of the Spirit, can put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). In fact he is called (a) to exercise mortification of what is fleshly within himself, (b) to put off, and put away, those things which are foreign to his new sainthood, (c) to put on those things which are consonant with his received holiness, (d) to fulfil the just requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4) as he walks in the Spirit and not in the flesh, (e) to do good works (Eph. 2:8-10, Matt. 5:16, Titus 2:14), and (f) to proclaim the Gospel of redemption.
  5. The situation of man as a new creation is that God as Father Son and Spirit dwell in him, and he dwells in them. Thus all their powers are brought to bear on him, in him, and against all evil. The Father declares the acquittal from accusation and judgement: the Son intercedes for him against all evil opposition, and the Spirit intercedes within them, which intercession the Father takes and uses.

6. The justified-sanctified person is given gifts which are to be used in love and service for both God and man. The gifts are varied and spread through the church, the body of Christ. This means that sanctification (obedience to God's law and plan) is a shared experience. It is in fact effected within the context of the community' for the community must itself be holy. The use of the gifts—ministerial' and mutually supportive—will cause the church to effect internal holiness and external action of witness and proclamation.

In the light of what we have written' we see the following:

- (a) God has elected man to holiness.
- (b) He has brought him into holiness through conversion. He is given the gift' status' position of holiness' as well as power for living in sanctification' particularly as he remains dependent upon God and His power.
- (c) Man is not free from law as such' but he is liberated from law' (i) as a way of attaining holiness' (ii) as the condemnation which paralyses his moral powers' and (iii) as a way of justifying himself. Law' in fact' becomes the 'outshining of God's nature'' and thus the way of holiness both as to meaning and directive.
- (d) Man works out his life (his salvation) with 'fear and trembling' ie. holy reverence and awe. He rejects intemperance of spirit and presumption of mind.
- (e) The theological divisions of justification and sanctification, and even glorification do not obtain. They are all subsumed under 'redemption' and this will include resurrection, the obtaining of glory and the ultimate inheritance, by which man shall become 'a nation of kings and priests unto God.'

This is the ultimate: seeing His face because of the holy heart, worshipping and serving Him forever.