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Some Of My Experiences In Teaching Holiness

by Samuel L. Brengle

I once received a letter from one of the most devoted young officers I know, in which he said, "I love holiness more and more, but I am just about discouraged. It seems to me that I shall never be able to teach holiness, for it seems that I get things too straight, or not straight enough."

God bless him! I think I know just how he feels. One day, a few months after I got the blessing of holiness, I felt most gloomy about my inability to get people sanctified. I knew, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that I had a clean heart, but somehow I felt I couldn't properly teach others how to get it.

That morning I met a certain brother who gets more people sanctified than any man I know, and I asked him, "How shall I teach holiness so that my people will get it?" His reply was, "Load and fire, load and fire."

Light broke in on me at once. I saw that it was my business to pray and study my Bible and talk with those who had the blessing, until I got myself so loaded that it would almost talk itself, and then fire away as best I could, and that it was God's business to make the people receive the truth and become holy.

That was on the Saturday. The next day, I went to my people loaded with truth, backed by love and faith, and I fired as hard and straight as I knew how, when lo! twenty people came to the Penitent form for holiness. I had never seen anything like that before in my life, but I have seen it many times since.

From then till now I have attended strictly to my part of the business, and trusted God to do His part, and I have had some success everywhere I have gone. But everywhere, also, Satan has sorely tempted me at times, especially when the people hardened their hearts and would not believe and obey. Then I have often felt that the trouble must be in my way of preaching the truth.

At one time the devil would say, "You are too straight; you will drive people away." Then again he would remark, "You are not straight enough, and that is the reason the people don't get holy." In this way I have suffered very much at times. But I have always gone to the Lord with my trouble and told Him that He knew my earnest desire was to preach the truth just right, so that the people would love and trust Him with perfect hearts.

Then the Lord has comforted me, and shown me that the devil was tempting me, in order to get me to stop preaching holiness. A few times, professors of religion have come to me and told me I was doing more harm than good. But they were the kind Paul describes, "who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof," and I have followed his command, "From such turn away," and have not dared to listen to them any more than to the devil himself.

And so I have kept at it, through evil report and through good report, and the dear Lord has never left me alone, but has stood by me and given me the victory, and I have constantly seen some one led into the glorious light of liberty and perfect love. Satan has tried in many ways to get me to stop preaching holiness, for he knew that if he could get me to stop he would soon get me to sin, and so overthrow me altogether.

But the Lord put a godly fear in me from the beginning, by calling my attention to Jeremiah 1:6,8 and 17. The last verse made me very careful to speak just what the Lord said. Then Ezekiel 2:4-8 and 3:8-11 impressed me very much. In these Scriptures the Lord commanded me to speak His truth as He gave it to me, whether the people would hear or not. In Ephesians 4:15, He told me how I was to preach it—that is, "in love."

I then saw that I must preach the truth just as straight as I possibly could, but that I must be careful always to keep my heart full of love for the people to whom I was talking.

I read in 2 Corinthians 12:14,15 how Paul loved the people. He said, "I seek not yours, but you; ... and I will very glad

ly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.Â” Then in Acts 20:20 and 27, Â”I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you Â… for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Â” This made me feel that to withhold the truth of holiness from the peopleÂ—which is necessary to their eternal salvationÂ—was worse than keeping back bread from starving children, or as the murder of souls is worse than the murder of bodies. So I earnestly prayed to the Lord to help me love the people, and preach the whole truth to them, though they hate me for itÂ—and, bless Him! He answered my prayer.

Three Important Points

There are three points in teaching holiness that the Lord has led me to emphasize continually.

First, that men cannot make themselves holy, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots. That no amount of good works, or self-sacrifice and denial, of labors for the salvation of others, can cleanse the heart, can take out the roots of pride, vanity, temper, impatience, fear and shame of the Cross, lust, hatred, emulation, strife, self-indulgence and the like, and in their stead put unmixed, perfect Â”love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.Â”

Truly, millions who have labored to purify the secret springs of their hearts, only to fail, can testify, Â”It is not of works lest any man should boast.Â”

Second, I keep prominent the fact that the blessing is received by faith. A poor woman wanted some grapes from the king’s garden for her sick boy. She offered the gardener money, but he would not sell the grapes. She came again, and met the king’s daughter, and offered her money for the grapes. The daughter said, Â”My father is a king; he does not sell his grapes.Â” Then she led the poor woman into the king’s presence, and told him her story, and he gave her as many as she wanted.

Our God, your Father, is King of kings. He will not sell His holiness and the graces of His Spirit, but He will give them to all who will ask in simple, childlike faith. Truly He will. Â”Ask, and ye shall receive.Â” Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith Â… Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. By faith the law of God is written on our hearts, so that when we read the command, Â”Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,Â” we find a law of love in us because we have within us a law that corresponds to the command.

The Apostle says, Â”with the heart man believeth unto righteousnessÂ” (Rom. 10:10), and that statement is true to our experience, for where real heart-faith is, it makes the impatient man patient, the proud man humble, the lustful man chaste, the covetous man benevolent, the quarrelsome man meek, the liar truthful, the man who hates loving; it turns misery into joy, and gives peace and constant comfort.

Third, I emphasize the truth that the blessing is to be received by faith now. The man who expects to get it by works will always have something more to do before he can claim the blessing, and so never comes to the point where he can say, Â”The blessing is now mine. But the humble soul, who expects to get it by faith, sees that it is a gift; and, believing that God is as willing to give it now as at some future time, trusts and receives it at once.

By thus urging the people to expect the blessing Â”just now,Â” I have sometimes had them get it just while I was talking. People who had often been to the Penitent form, and had wrestled and prayed for the blessing, have received it while sitting in their seats listening to the simple Â”word of faith which we preach.Â”