

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Andrew Murray Perfecting Holiness

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Perfecting Holiness

By Andrew Murray (1828 – 1917)

“Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

We know what holiness is. God alone is holy, and holiness is that which God communicates of Himself. Separation and cleansing and consecration are not holiness, but only the preliminary steps on the way to it. The temple was holy because God dwelt in it. Not that which is given to God is holy, but that which God accepts and appropriates, that which He takes possession of, takes up into His own fellowship and use – that is holy. “I am the Lord which makes you holy,” was God’s promise to His people of old, on which the command was based, “Be ye holy” (Lev. 20:7-8). God’s taking them for His own made them a holy people; their entering into this holiness of God, yielding themselves to His will and fellowship and service, was what the command “Be ye holy” called them to.

Even so it is with us Christians. We are made holy in Christ; we are saints or holy ones. The call comes to us to follow after holiness to perfect holiness, to yield ourselves to the God who is ready to sanctify us wholly. It is the knowledge of what God has done in making us His holy ones, and has promised to do in sanctifying us wholly, that will give us courage to perfect holiness.

“Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us... holiness.” Which promises? They had just been mentioned: “I will dwell in them...and I will be their God...I will receive you...and I will be to you a Father” (2 Cor. 6:16, 18). It was God’s accepting the temple and dwelling there Himself that made it holy. It is God’s dwelling in us that makes us holy, that gives us not only the motive, but the courage and the power to perfect holiness, to yield ourselves for Him to possess perfectly and entirely. It is God’s being a father to us, begetting His own life, His own Son within us, forming Christ in us, until the Son and the Father make their abode in us, that will give us confidence to believe that it is possible to perfect holiness, and will reveal to us the secret of its attainment. “Having therefore these promises, beloved,” that is, knowing them, living on them, claiming and obtaining them, let us perfect holiness.

This faith is the secret power of the growth of the inner life of perfect holiness. But there are hindrances that check and prevent this growth. These must be watched against and removed. “Having these promises...let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” Every defilement, outward or inward, in conduct or sentiment, in the physical or the spiritual life, must be cleansed and cast away. Cleansing in the blood of Christ, cleansing by the Word, cleansing by the pruning knife or the fire – in any way or by any means – but we must be cleansed. In the fear of the Lord every sin must be cut off and cast out; everything doubtful or defiling must be put away; soul and body and spirit must be preserved entire and blameless. Thus cleansing ourselves from all defilement we shall perfect holiness: the spirit of holiness will fill God’s temple with His holy presence and power.

Beloved, having these promises, let us perfect holiness. Perfectly holy! Perfect in holiness! “let us yield ourselves to these thoughts, to these wishes, to these promises, of our God. Beginning with the perfect childlike heart, pressing on in the perfect way, clinging to a perfect Savior, living in fellowship with a God whose way and work is perfect, let us not be afraid to come to God with His own command as our prayer: “Perfect holiness, O my Lord!” He knows what He means by it, and we shall know if we follow on to know.

“Lord, I am called to perfect holiness: I come to Thee for it; make me as perfectly holy as a redeemed sinner can be on earth.”

Let this be the spirit of our daily prayer: I would walk before God with a perfect heart – perfect in Christ Jesus; in the path of perfect holiness. I would this day come as near perfection as grace can make it possible for me. “Perfecting holiness” shall, in the power of His Spirit, be my aim.

“Taken from Be Perfect by Andrew Murray.