

How To Keep Holiness

Samuel Logan Brengle:

Do you ask, 'How can I keep the blessing?'

1. Do not let your poor heart be burdened with the thought that you have to do it all yourself. In this, as in all else, you are only a worker together with God. He loves you more than a mother loves her little child, and He is going to help you to keep the blessing. Remember that the blessing is simply the result of His indwelling in your heart' and you are not to think so much about keeping the blessing as about keeping Him.

It will not be a hard matter to keep Him in your heart if you are in earnest, for He wanted to get there when you were a sinner, and He certainly desires to stay there as long as you will let Him; and if you will let Him, He will keep you.

One of our leading Officers, who is a personal friend of mine, once told me that when he first heard the doctrine of holiness, he felt that he could not be holy while engaged in worldly business. But one day he read the prayer of Jesus: 'I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.' He saw at that moment that God could keep him, and he sought and found the blessing, and has been rejoicing ever since.

Oh, how it rested me and comforted my heart one day, when, sore tempted by the devil, I read these words, 'Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.' I saw that He was able to keep me, and I knew that He was willing, and my heart rested on the promise; and, bless Him, He does keep me.

'Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' (Isaiah xli. 10.)

Paul got fairly jubilant over the keeping power of God, -- it was his boast when he wrote, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels' (fallen angels, or devils), 'nor principalities, nor powers' (no combination of devils or men), 'nor things present, nor things to come, nor height' (of prosperity), 'nor depth' (of adversity), 'nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. viii. 35-39)

Paul trusted God to keep him, and so must we. We should surely fall if God withheld His help for a moment.

But James tells us that 'faith without works is dead;' and so we must not only trust God, but must work together with God if we would keep the blessing.

2. To keep the blessing, you must keep all upon the altar. What you have given to the Lord you must not take back. You gave all to get the blessing, and you must continue to give all to keep it.

My all is on the altar. I'll take it back no more, must be your motto and your song, The devil will try to get you to come down from the cross; the world will allure you; the flesh will cry out against you; your friends may weep over you, or frown upon you, or tease and torment, or threaten you; some of your comrades will criticize you and doubt you, but you must stick to Jesus, and take nothing back that you have given to Him. There is usefulness, and peace, and God's smile, and a crown, and a kingdom before you, but only condemnation, and ruin, and hell behind.

A little heathen boy in Africa heard a sermon about Jesus, and His tender dying love and saving power, and he gave himself fully to the Lord, and Jesus came into his heart. This so enraged his heathen father that he said, 'I'll get this Jesus out of him; I'll beat Him out.' And he beat the little fellow most cruelly.

But the boy was still true. Then the father said, 'I'll smoke this Jesus out of him.' So he put the boy into a hut, shut up the opening in the roof, and nearly smothered him with smoke. That failed also, and then he tried starvation, and he gave the boy nothing to eat for several days. All persecution failed, however, and the little fellow remained true. He had given all to Jesus, and he would have nothing back. When asked how he had endured all the terrible trials he had passed through, he quietly said, 'I just stuck to Jesus.'

3. If you would keep the blessing, you must be quick to obey God. I do not mean by this that you are to get into such haste that you will not take time to think and pray about all that you do. God wants you to use your head and your heart and all the good sense He has given you. He wants you to take time to speak to Him, and consider, and find out His will; but once you have found it out, if you would have His smile and favor, and keep the blessing, you must not delay, but obey at once. Oh, the losses of peace and power and joy and sweet communion with God that people suffer through hesitation at this point! Like Felix, they wait for 'a convenient season,' which never comes! and, like Felix, they lose all. 'Strike while the iron is hot' 'Make hay while the sun shines.' 'Put out to sea while the tide is in.' Do as Abraham did. God told him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering -- Isaac, the joy of his house, the light of his eyes, the hope of his old age, the treasure of his heart! He did not parley and delay, but rose up early in the morning took Isaac, his son and went unto the place of which God had told him.'

A Salvation Soldier who was greatly used of God told me that he was one day reading a half-religious novel. He had reached a most thrilling point in the story when the Holy Spirit seemed to say to him, 'Stop reading this at once, and you shall never regret it.' He said that he closed the book at once, put it down and never opened it again, and such a blessing came into his soul as he was hardly able to contain. Years after, when he told me this, he was still rejoicing that he had promptly obeyed the voice of the Lord, and left that sort of thing for ever.

If you have lost the blessing through a failure to promptly obey, do not be utterly discouraged, but begin over again, and the Lord will restore you. But do not trifle with God again; pray and believe for His help to obey, lest a worse thing come upon you.

4. If you would keep the blessing, you must not depend upon your feelings, but as a friend of mine used to say, 'Stand by your facts' Young Christians are very likely to be betrayed into mistakes by their feelings -- by their happy feelings as well as their unhappy ones.

When they are happy, they are in danger of thinking themselves better than they are, and of not watching and praying as they should; and when they are not happy, they are likely to get discouraged, cast away their confidence in the Lord, and conclude that it is useless for them to try to be holy. The safest way is to pay attention to your facts, and let your feelings take care of themselves.

If people are kind to you, and your digestion is good, and your sleep sound, you will probably feel well. But if people are unkind, and the east wind blows, and you eat something that lies heavy in your stomach, and your sleep is broken by horrid dreams, you will probably not feel well; but in neither case is your relation to God changed. Your facts are just the same. If you have given yourself to God, and have taken nothing back, but can look up into His dear face and say, 'My all is on the altar, and I trust in Thee,' then you are His, and your business is to stand by that fact, and trust that the Blood keeps you clean.

When you are happy, sing songs, and when you are heavy-hearted pray, and try to sing a little too, and never cast away your confidence, for there is a great reward before you, if you hold fast.

5. One of the greatest helps to keeping the blessing is for two or three young people who have it to meet together as often as possible to read the Bible, and pray with and encourage each other. This can usually be done just before or between the meetings on Sunday. This practice helped me more than anything else, I think, when I first got the blessing. Put a burning coal or sack by itself, and the fire will go out, and it will be cold and black; but put several sticks or coals together, and they will burn brightly. And so it is with hearts full of holy fire.

At such little meetings it is well to unite in prayer for others whom you are eager to see converted, or to enter into the blessing, and as you see them getting saved and sanctified, this will add mightily to your own faith and love.

Finally, wholehearted and continued consecration and self-denial, earnest prayer, joyful and diligent study of God's Word, deep humility before the Lord, aggressive work for others, and humble definite testimony to the blessing, will surely establish us in holiness, and keep us from falling.

How blest are they who still abide Close sheltered in Thy bleeding side:

Who life and strength from Thee derive, And for Thee fight, and in Thee live.