

Hindrances To Obtaining The Blessing

Samuel Logan Brengle:

Holiness has not legs and does not go walking about visiting idle people, as a lazy Christian seemed to think who told me that he thought the experience would "come" to him "some day." A sister aptly remarked: "He might as well expect the hall to come to him."

The fact is, there are hindrances in the way of holiness with most people; but you that are seeking the experience must put from you, for ever, the thought that any of these hindrances are in God, or in your circumstances, for they are not, but are altogether in yourselves. This being true, it is the extreme of folly to sit down with indifference and quietly wait, with folded hands, for the blessed experience to come to you. Be sure of this, it will not come, any more than a crop of potatoes will come to the lazy fellow who sits in the shade and never lifts his hoe, nor does a stroke of labor through all the spring and summer months. The rule in the spiritual world is this: "If any would not work, neither should he eat," and, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

Therefore, the part of wisdom is to begin at once, by a diligent study of God's word, much secret prayer, unflinching self-examination, rigid self-denial, hearty obedience to all present light and a faithful attendance at the meetings of God's people, to find out what these hindrances are, and, by the grace of God, to put them away, though it cost as much pain as to cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye.

Now, the Bible tells us -- and the testimony and experience of all holy people agree with the Bible -- that the two great practical hindrances to holiness are: First, imperfect consecration; and, second, imperfect faith.

Before a watchmaker can clean and regulate my watch, I must give it unreservedly into his hands. Before a doctor can cure me, I must take his medicine in the manner and at the time he requires. Before a captain can navigate me across the trackless ocean, I must get on board his ship and stay there. Just so, if I would have God cleanse and regulate my heart with all its affections, if I would have Him cure my sin-sick soul, if I would have Him take me safely across the ocean of time into that greater ocean of eternity, I must put myself fully into His hands and stay there. In other words, I must do what He tells me to. I must be perfectly consecrated to Him.

A Captain knelt with her soldiers, and sang: "Anywhere with Jesus I will go," adding: "Anywhere but to H____, Lord." Her consecration was imperfect, and today she is out of Salvation Army work. There were some things she would not do for Jesus, and therefore Jesus would not cleanse or keep her.

The other day, a poor backslider told me that he knew, at one time, that he ought to give up tobacco. God wanted him to do so, but he held on to it and used it secretly. His imperfect consecration kept him from holiness and led to his downfall, and today he walks the streets a common drunkard, on the open road to Hell.

In his heart was secret disloyalty, and God could not cleanse or keep him. God wants perfect loyalty in the secret of your own heart, and He demands it, not only for His glory, but also for your good; for, if you can understand it, God's highest glory and your highest good are one and the same thing.

This consecration consists in a perfect putting off of your own will, your disposition, temper, desires, likes and dislikes, and a perfect putting on of Christ's will, Christ's disposition, temper, desires, likes and dislikes. In short, perfect consecration is a putting off self and a putting on Christ; a giving up your own will in all things and receiving the will of Jesus instead. This may seem well-nigh impossible and very disagreeable to your unsanctified heart; but if you mean business for eternity, and will intelligently and unflinchingly look at this strait gate through which so few enter, and tell the Lord that you want to go through that way, though it cost you your life, the Holy Spirit will soon show you that it is not only possible, but easy and delightful thus to yield yourself to God.

The second hindrance in the way of him who would be holy is imperfect faith. When Paul wrote to his corps of Salvationists in Thessalonica, he praised them for being "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia," and added, "in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad" (I Thess. i. 7, 8). That was the best believing corps in all Europe, and so real and sturdy was their faith that they could endure much persecution, as we see from chaps. i. 6, ii. 14, and iii. 2-5; so that Paul says, "We were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress by your faith" (iii. 7). Strong faith that, but it was not perfect, for Paul adds, "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (iii. 10). And because of their imperfect faith they were not sanctified; so we find the Apostle praying, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (v. 23).

All who are born of God and have the witness of His Spirit to their justification know full well that it was not through any good works of their own, nor by growing into it, that they were saved, but it was "by grace through faith" (Eph. ii. 8). But very many of these dear people seem to think that we are to grow into sanctification, or are to get it by our own works. But the Lord settled that question, and made it as plain as words can make it, when He told Paul that He sent him to the Gentiles to "open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts xxvi. 18). Not by works, nor by growth, but by faith were they to be made holy.

If you will be holy you must come to God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22), and then, if you will wait patiently before Him, the wonder-work shall be done.

Consecration and faith are matters of the heart, and the trouble with most people is there; but, no doubt, there are some people whose trouble is with the head. They fail to get the blessing because they are seeking something altogether too small.

Holiness is a great blessing. It is the renewal of the whole man in the image of Jesus. It is the utter destruction of all hatred, envy, malice, impatience, covetousness, pride, lust, fear of man, love of ease, love of human admiration and applause, love of splendor, shame of the Cross, self-will and the like. It makes its possessors "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29), as Jesus was; patient, kind, full of forbearance. pitiful, full of tender compassion and love; full of faith, benevolent and zealous in every good word and work.

Now I have heard some people claim the blessing of holiness because they had given up tobacco, feathers or something of that sort; while they were still impatient, unkind or absorbed with the cares of this life. The result was, they soon got discouraged, concluded there was no such blessing, and became bitter opponents of the doctrine of holiness. Their trouble was in seeking too small a blessing. They gave up certain outward things, but the inward self-life was still uncrucified. The gold miner washes the dirt off his ore, but he cannot wash the dross out of it. The fire must do that, and then the gold will be pure. So the laying aside of outward things is necessary; but only the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire can purify the secret desires and affections of the heart and make it holy. And for this you must earnestly seek by perfect consecration and perfect faith.

There are other people who fail to obtain the blessing because they are seeking something altogether distinct from holiness. They want a vision of Heaven, of balls of fire, of some angel; or they want an experience that will save them from all trials and temptations and from all possible mistakes and infirmities; or they want a power that will make sinners fall like dead men when they speak.

They overlook the verse which declares that "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (I Tim. i. 5); which teaches us that holiness is nothing more than a pure heart filled with perfect love, a clear conscience toward God and man, which comes from a faithful discharge of duty and simple faith without any hypocrisy. They overlook the fact that purity and perfect love are so Christ-like and so rare in this world, that they are in themselves a great, great blessing.

They overlook the fact that while Jesus was a great Man, King of kings and Lord of lords, He was also a lowly Carpenter and "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant ... and humbled Himself" (Phil. ii. 7, 8). They overlook the fact that they are to be as Jesus was, "in this present world," and that "this present world" is the place of His humiliation, where He is "despised and rejected of men"; a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"; with "no (outward) beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. liii. 2, 3). "In this present world" His only beauty is that inward "beauty of holiness" (I Chron. xvi. 29), that humble spirit of gentleness and love, that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Pet. iii. 4).

Is your soul hungering and thirsting for the righteousness of perfect love? Do you want to be like Jesus? Are you prepared to suffer with Him and to be "hated of all men for His name's sake" (Matt. x. 22)? Then, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset" you (Heb. xii. 1); present your body "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1), and "run with patience the race which is set before you, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith" (Heb. xii. 1, 2). Come to the Lord with the same simple faith that you did when you were saved; lay your case before Him, ask Him to take away all uncleanness and to perfect you in love, and then believe that He does it. If you will then resist all Satan's temptations to doubt, you will soon find all your hindrances gone, and yourself rejoicing "with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet. i. 8).

Hindrances To Obtaining The Blessing

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thess. v. 23, 24).