

What Peter Said About Holiness

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

We have seen in previous chapters how highly Jesus and St. Paul estimated the importance of Pentecost. Paul was the wisest interpreter and greatest theologian of the Christian religion and Church. As we have seen, he urged the Pentecostal experience upon Christian believers, as a second work of grace, in more than seventy passages of scripture. He evidently believed in the baptism with the Holy Ghost for sanctification.

What about Peter, the first leader of the apostolic band? Did he, too, accept this doctrine? We shall see. He had heard his Savior in the upper chamber pray that the disciples might be sanctified. He had heard His parting charge to tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. He had heard the parting promise, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not, many days hence." "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

Peter was among the number that waited in the Pentecostal chamber. He was there the morning that the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and he, with the rest, was filled with the Holy Spirit. The day did not pass before he was urging the multitude in these words: "Repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38, 39).

In Acts 15:8, 9, he tells in a speech what happened both to Cornelius and his household and to the disciples at Pentecost: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

Now we turn to his epistles.

In I Peter 1:1, 2, he writes "to the . . . elect . . . through sanctification of the Spirit."

He does not get through the first chapter before he writes (I Peter 1:15, 16), "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

He says again (verse 22): "Seeing ye have purified your souls . . . love one another from a clean heart" (A.S.V., footnote).

In the next chapter (I Peter 2: 1, 2) he exhorts them thus: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

In I Peter 2:5, he says: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood."

In I Peter 2:9 (A.S.V.), he tells them: "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people for God's own possession."

In I Peter 2:21, 22, he writes them: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin."

In I Peter 2:24, he gives the very purpose of the death of Christ: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness."

He commands Christians, in I Peter 3:15, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Dr. Godbey makes this striking comment on this passage: "The unsanctified Christian has Christ and depravity in his heart. Christ rules or He would not stay. Cast out all else and let Christ rule alone. That is to sanctify Christ as Lord of the heart." The verb "sanctify" is in the aorist tense. Dr. Steele renders it: "Sanctify once for all place in your heart for Jesus as Lord."

In I Peter 4:1, 2, the apostle says: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

This First Epistle of Peter closes with the promise (5:10): "But the God of all grace . . . after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Dr. Godbey observes that the Christian does not need to suffer any longer than it takes the old man to be crucified; then God will do the perfecting

work, and stablish the Christian in sanctification. Second Epistle

At the very outset (II Peter 1:3), he assures Christians that Christ "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto LIFE and GODLINESS." We receive life in regeneration, and godliness in sanctification.

Then in verse four he says Jesus "hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This escape from corruption is the fundamental idea of sanctification. It is not corruption suppressed and retained, but corruption slain and escaped from, that is held up as the blessed hope of the Christian's heart.

In II Peter 3:11, he writes: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all conversation [living] and godliness."

He then closes the epistle with the injunction (3:14): "Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." The same adjectives are applied to Jesus, the precious Lamb without spot or blemish, indicating that we can live like Jesus, the Lamb of God. Conclusion

Here, then, are seventeen passages of scripture in the lips and from the pen of Saint Peter. In some of these he vigorously exhorts and commands believers to get sanctified; in others he speaks of Christians as having already obtained the blessing. He uses such phrases as: "cleansing their hearts," "clean heart," "an holy priesthood," "an holy nation," "ceased from sin," "partakers of the divine nature," "escaped the corruption that is in the world," "without spot," "without blemish."

He used the words "sanctify" "sanctification," "purified," "righteous," and "perfect," one time each; he used the word "godliness" twice and applied the adjective "holy" to men five times. (See King James and Authorized versions.) He was the voice of God to give all believers the command, "Be ye holy"; for I am holy."

He plainly taught that this was induced in the heart of a Christian believer by the cleansing baptism with the Holy Ghost, the Pentecostal experience.

Can any fair-minded student of the Holy Word bring all these seventeen passages of scripture together, weigh their meaning, the definition of the words, and the spiritual import of these wonderful phrases, and then be in doubt as to whether the Apostle Peter placed a high estimate upon Pentecost? Yea, more, is it not perfectly evident that he believed that the Pentecostal baptism cleansed the hearts of Christians and enabled them to be "holy," "sanctified," "without spot and without blemish"?

Now add to these seventeen passages by Peter the more than seventy others of the same import from the Apostle Paul. Eighty-seven passages from two authors of the New Testament, urging Christians to become sanctified and holy, by commands, exhortations, promises, and prayers!

To deny that these writers taught an epochal experience called sanctification or holiness, subsequent to regeneration, is to trifle with the solemn Word of God!