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Perfect Holiness - The High Calling of God in Christ Jesus - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/5/30 2:39

Perfect Holiness - The High Calling of God in Christ Jesus

by Art Katz

Today's selection from Charles Spurgeon's devotional Faith's Checkbook (July 24) smote me in my inner man. It is entitled 'Perfect Purity' and is a quote from Revelation 3:5 'He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.' And then his statement is:

Warrior of the cross, fight on! Never rest till thy victory is complete; for thine eternal reward will prove worthy of a life of warfare. See, here is perfect calling, purity for thee! A few in Sardis kept their garments undefiled, and their recompense is to be spotless. Perfect holiness is the prize of our calling; let us not miss it.

I have never heard anyone else equate perfect holiness as being the mark of the high calling of God. Usually 'high calling' would be some final and ultimate expression of ministry in the bringing of the Word, but in Spurgeon's view, which we need to soberly consider, the issue of high calling is the issue of holiness. 'Perfect holiness' sounds like a redundancy; if it is not perfect it is not holy. If there is any imperfection, holiness is invalidated. That is just the nature of it. To be holy implies something perfect, and that is why it is a struggle to obtain this completion, this perfection.

Spurgeon continues:

See, here is joy! Thou shalt wear holiday robes, such as men put on at wedding feasts; thou shalt be clothed with gladness, and be made bright with rejoicing. Painful struggles shall end in peace of conscience and joy in the Lord.

Do you notice the adjectives he uses: joy, gladness, bright with rejoicing, peace of conscience and joy in the Lord? I wonder if he was even conscious of what he was composing, but he touched on all the inexorable signs of holiness, namely, joy, perfect peace of conscience, rejoicing and gladness of heart. In other words, something accompanies this condition of heart when it is finally attested and attained in the life of a believer.

Let's take joy. The attempt charismatically to obtain joy through feigned and manipulative means is the cheap effort to obtain what can only be obtained through holiness. When your mind, your heart, your thoughts, your dispositions and your motives are righteous, you have come to a certain place by the sanctifying work of God where the joy and the peace of the Lord set in. It is a remarkable state of being, and this is what I believe Spurgeon is getting at here. This is not euphoric writing or Spurgeon taking his literary liberties; he is one of a smaller company of souls who have known this and who can therefore write out of the reality of his own life.

Maybe he had the advantage of being saved at the age of fifteen. He did not have to overcome years of dissolute living, in sex and drugs and alcohol; he came virtually as an unblemished young man, and yet, he was still convicted deeply of sin. His whole Christian life had brought him to a place where he could make a statement like that. He is making a case for the issue of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus as being the issue of perfect holiness. For when it will come, here will be the signs:

He says here is joy. Something happens when there is the joy of the Lord. You have overcome and come to a place of union with the Lord Himself where you can be 'clothed with gladness.' None of those nagging things that cloud our joy or rob our gladness will be there to function. They will have been taken care of in the process of the struggle of overcoming. The mind battles, the questionable motives, the evidences that we are not in the right place will be gone. We will be able to say, in some measure, with Jesus, 'The prince of this world has come but he finds nothing in me.' There is nothing that he can single out, a habit, a disposition of heart or mind or spirit that is critical, or jealous or envious or fretful or anxious. When we attain to that, there is a joy, a tremendous peace and a gladness, and we shall be made bright with rejoicing.

He speaks of vessels of brightness - a continual brightness where there is no sullenness or moodiness. '...and be made bright with rejoicing. Painful struggles shall end...' because the purpose of the painful struggle was your sanctification. The struggle is between the flesh and Spirit, but the contest is now over, the Spirit has prevailed, the Lord has given you a white garment. 'The painful struggle shall end in peace of conscience.' Paul speaks of having a conscience undefiled before God and before men. When you've covered both those bases, there is no other base to consider. If your conscience is clear and free between men and God, there is no issue with God and no issue with men; you are walking with impeccable righteousness. Then the struggle has ended. And there WILL be a struggle until you come to that end, but only if you are serious about this. If you are not serious about this, and in fact, you find it normative to be moody and sullen, or live on the periphery of Christian life as an inactive participant, then there will be no struggle for you. It is only a struggle for those who want a garment, who want to be at the wedding. They want to be a privileged guest; they want to enjoy a conscience free and clear from all blemishes and from inward conflict of motive and from all self-seeking. They have walked this out with God; they have fought this out; the Lord has allowed the enemy to play upon the flesh, but they are fighting that problem through; they are not making their peace with it; they are not compromising and learning to live with it; they are fighting the good fight because they are concerned to attain to that place in the Lord of triumphant victory; they are willing for the pain of the struggle. But it ends in peace of conscience and the joy of the Lord. Can you imagine a church like that? Imagine its witness both to the Jewish community and to the Greek. Just the presence of such a people will be validated by the brightness out of which the testimony comes.

See, here is victory! Thou shalt have thy triumph. Palm, and crown, and white robes shall be thy recompense; thou shalt be treated as a conqueror, and owned as such by the Lord Himself. See, here is priestly array! Thou shalt stand before the Lord in such raiment as the sons of Aaron wore; thou shalt offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving and draw near unto the Lord with incense of praise.

I think it came up once in the class that the Levites are okay for the outer court. They can toss the sacrifice and hack the animals and deal with the public. But only the Zadok priesthood can minister unto the Lord in the holy place. The others are okay for the outer court, but the Zadokite priests, those who have kept their garments so to speak are the ones that shall draw near to the Lord.

Who would not fight for a Lord who gives such large honors to the very least of His faithful servants?

Now this is an interesting thing: 'Least of His faithful servants.' Here is a challenge that is put before the whole welter of the entire body of Christ. No man is excluded in the possibility of the Zadokite priestliness because of lack of right upbringing or unhappy circumstances of life or lack of character or lack of parentage or heredity or environment. There is no excuse. Any believer can obtain to this if he is willing for the struggle. So Spurgeon concludes:

Who would not fight for a Lord who gives such large honors? Who would not be clothed in a fool's coat for Christ's sake, seeing He will robe us with glory?

Spurgeon is saying that if you are going to take this seriously, you are going to be looked upon as a fool. You are making yourself a candidate not only of the opposition of the powers of darkness, but even for the ridicule of the saints who are content with something much less. Such will always find ways to flaunt and to taunt. If you are willing presently to put on the fool's garment, you will be ultimately and eternally robed with glory.

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Re: Perfect Holiness - The High Calling of God in Christ Jesus - posted by npautsky (), on: 2006/5/30 4:57

Thanks so much for sharing this, It is very encouraging. What a blessing.