

W. E. McCumber

**LOVE
CONQUERS
ALL**

*Essays on
Holy
Living*

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W. E. McCUMBER



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Dedication

Holy life flowing from a holy heart is the unifying theme of the brief articles that comprise this little book. They first appeared in the *Herald of Holiness*, for which I have had the privilege of writing for 15 years.

To the present editor of the *Herald of Holiness*, Dr. Wesley Tracy, this book is dedicated as an expression of my sincere appreciation for his excellent work and encouraging friendship.

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1

Pure Love
Reigning

Our Distinctive Doctrine

The cardinal doctrine of our church is redemption—that deliverance from sin and death, through the atoning death of Christ, which is offered to mankind through the preaching of the gospel.

Our distinctive doctrine is entire sanctification, the cleansing of the heart from inbred sin and the energizing of the life for service to God. This is wrought through the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

The church has a right to insist that its schools teach, its pulpits proclaim, and its people experience this distinguishing tenet. For this mission we were created. For this mission we now exist. If we fail, we shall constitute our own judgment.

This distinguishing doctrine should be taught and preached in the context of other doctrines. Holiness is robbed of significance and becomes an offense if it is the only key we strike, the only string we play. Those who are silent on the subject have no place in our ministry. Those who are vocal only on that subject sabotage the effectiveness of their ministries. Those who find it nowhere in the Bible do not belong in our pulpits. Those who find it everywhere in the Bible make the pulpit a laughingstock to thoughtful people. Holiness proclaimed emphatically but not exclusively should be our aim.

To expound Scripture is to proclaim holiness. “It is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:16, RSV). It is written in many places and in many ways. The provision and promise of God to make us holy are declared throughout Scripture. Prayers for the experience and testimonies to the experience meet us on the pages of God’s Word. This biblical cleansing and empowering lies at the heart of our personal quest and our corporate mission.

Pure love, expressed in devoted obedience to God and unselfish service to people, is the essence of holiness. Such

a life is beyond human resources. Only the holy God can make us holy people. This He wills to do. To realize His will ourselves and to make it known to others is the goal of our church.

♦ ♦ 2 ♦ ♦

The Hallowing Presence

“The place where you stand is holy.” This is what God said to Moses at the burning bush and to Joshua on the outskirts of Jericho (Josh. 5:15, RSV; cf. Exod. 3:5).

What makes a place holy? One thing only—the presence of the Holy One. His presence made the Temple holy. His presence makes a life holy.

The place where God encounters a person to change life and command service is sacred. Not the sand, not the bush, not the fire, but God—present, speaking, acting—made that desert spot holy ground for Moses. Not the river he had crossed nor the city he would conquer, but God made the place where Joshua stood holy ground.

Only the presence of God makes a building a temple or a congregation a church. The transformation of the secular to the sacred, the profane to the hallowed, is not achieved by human effort or activity, however pious. Holiness is achieved only by the living God as He graciously draws near to redeem and to enlist human life.

We can meet together, sing hymns, recite prayers, read Scripture, and give offerings, but all of this is empty ritual in a mausoleum unless God is present to own and to bless us. We can make laws, chant slogans, battle evils, and light victory fires, but our reforms are cosmetic and ephemeral unless God is present to energize and direct our lives. Where holiness is concerned, everything depends upon the Presence.

The presence of God cannot be manipulated or controlled by His people, not even by ordained people in clerical dress. God is not a genie who appears because we rub *the lamp*. He does not come or go because we tap a bell, blow a whistle, or point a finger. He is sovereign.

His presence is not capricious, however. He comes where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name—which means at His command and under His authority. Obedience assures His presence; disobedience forfeits His presence.

God is the Holy One. Nothing is holy except by His presence. Nothing is holy in His absence.

◆ ◆ 3 ◆ ◆

Our Sanctifying Savior

To be made holy is to be made like Jesus. He sanctifies us by reproducing His own life in our lives.

Holiness begins, therefore, with regeneration, with the marvelous experience of being born again. In the new birth, the life of the risen Jesus is communicated to us. We become alive spiritually, alive with His life.

The Christ-life is given to make us Christlike. It must come to expression inside of us and outside of us. It must govern our thinking, our intentions, our decision making. It must govern what we say and do, hallowing every relationship we bear to others in our homes, on our jobs, at our schools, in our business—wherever life touches life.

The life of Jesus in us cannot come to its desired expression unless the poisonous source of our old way of life is destroyed. The self-centeredness, the God-playing "I," from which our sins of word and deed emerged, must be crucified. A deep inner cleansing must occur that will make life a circle with one Center—Jesus—rather than an ellipse with two foci, Jesus and "I."

The holiness begun with the new birth demands that our hearts be sanctified wholly. The Christ-life must be released to flow unchecked and unpolluted. There must be "love out of a pure heart," to borrow a phrase from the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:5, ASV).

The full and clear expression of the Christ-life is hindered, however, not only by indwelling sin but also by the failures and blunders that are traceable to our fallen and infirm humanity. Damaging things are sometimes done, not because our hearts are wrong, but because our minds function so imperfectly. We have clay in our feet and wood in our heads! This means that, in addition to the experience of cleansing, which occurs in a moment of faith, there must be discipline and growth throughout a lifetime of faithfulness. When we discover anything in our attitudes and actions that is inconsistent with the Christ-life, we must change.

For this reason we never get beyond the need of renewed forgiveness and cleansing. To become increasingly like Jesus requires a daily sanctification of life.

The new birth, the cleansing of entire sanctification, and the constant examination, discipline, and pruning of our lives are all included in the process by which Jesus makes His life in us become His likeness in us. And the resurrection!



Christ's Sanctifying Death

Jesus died to make us holy.

Holiness results from communion with God. In the presence of the Holy One, as we commune with Him, we are transformed into His likeness. As Paul stated it, "We . . . are changed . . . from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

To say that Jesus died to make us holy, therefore, is to say that He died to remove the barriers to communion with

God. His death atones, “at-ones,” bringing God and persons together in a relationship where the transformation of character and conduct can occur.

Some of the barriers to communion with God are external, our transgressions of His law. The death of Christ makes it possible for God to forgive our sins without violating His nature or ours. Divine holiness and human freedom are preserved in the obedience of Christ that took Him to the Cross, and in the remission of sins that results from that Cross. God is “just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Forgiveness removes the barrier interposed between God and us by our wrongdoing.

Another barrier is internal, the corruption of our natures—“inbred sin,” to put it theologically. This barrier is also removed by the death of Jesus Christ. “The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanses us from *all* sin,” inward as well as outward (1 John 1:7, NKJV, italics added).

To put the matter positively, the Cross establishes the new covenant, which promises both the forgiveness of sins and the writing of the law inwardly—upon the heart (see Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Our acts of rebellion and the attitude of rebellion that prompted them are both removed by the atoning death of our Lord. “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (13:12, NKJV).

We are not made holy by rules and rituals, however scrupulously they are observed. We are made holy by the barrier-removing death of Jesus Christ. With the barriers of sin gone, the worshiping believer enters into a communion with God that will make him increasingly godlike.

♦ ♦ 5 ♦ ♦

Loving as Christ Loved

Those who love the Lord love also those who preach Him. “I bear you record,” wrote Paul to the Galatians, “that, if it

had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (4:15). Paul seems to have suffered from a serious eye problem, and some Christians would have chosen blindness for themselves to provide vision for him.

I thought of that while reading an account of the imprisonment of George Fox at Doomsdale, back in 1656. The dungeon there was "a nasty, stinking place . . . where the prisoners' excrements had not been carried out for scores of years." There he stood, with other Quakers, in mire, water, and urine up to their shoe tops. As further insult and torment, the excrement of prisoners on the floor above was poured down upon the heads of the Quakers. There they were kept for days with little food or water, unable to lie down at night in that veritable cesspool.

While Fox was there, a friend went to Oliver Cromwell, lord protector of England, and volunteered to take the place of Fox in the dungeon. Cromwell was profoundly moved, saying to his council, "Which of you would do so much for me if I was in the same position?"

When preachers and laypersons love one another in such measure, the Church is invincible.

Is this not how Jesus Christ loved us all? In His incarnation He descended to our condition. The glories of heaven were exchanged for the miseries of earth. And in His crucifixion He died for our sins, endured the judgment that was rightly ours. "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12) at His baptism and in His death, not because He had sinned, but as the sinner's Redeemer.

Some were willing to sacrifice themselves for Paul and for George Fox, who were saints and apostles. But Christ gave His life for enemies, not friends; for the unjust, not for the righteous. When we can begin to reproduce such love in our lives, the world will find Christianity credible. No argument is stronger than self-giving love.

◆ ◆ 6 ◆ ◆

Love Your Enemies

Jesus Christ commands His followers to love each other as He has loved them all (John 13:34). That is not easy when we consider how unlovely some of us are.

He also commands, “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44). If friends are sometimes hard to love, imagine how humanly impossible it is to love enemies. And He specifies *active* enemies—“those who . . . persecute you” (NKJV).

What Christ commands He enables. According to Hebrews, Christ died to make it possible for God to write His law upon our hearts (10:14-18). He so renews and cleanses and possesses our hearts that we can love friends and foes alike.

In his *Journal* the father of the Friends church, George Fox, tells of a time when an angry crowd beat him with fists and clubs until he fell to the ground stunned. When the power of God “refreshed” him, he got to his feet, stretched out his arms, and told them to strike again. A mason struck one of his hands with a stick. The vicious blow left it so skinned, bloody, and paralyzed that onlookers thought it would be crippled forever. Fox writes, “I was in the love of God to them all that had persecuted me.”

After a while “the Lord’s power” touched him. He recovered his strength and the use of his hand “in a minute” and “in the face and sight of them all.” Not another blow was struck.

The healing of his hand was a miracle. A greater miracle had taken place earlier, the healing of his heart, which enabled him to love his persecutors.

Like most of the persecutions Fox experienced, this one began in a “steeplehouse” and was instigated by preachers

and leading church members. Such nominal Christians also led most of the mobs that opposed and abused John Wesley. The experience of such persecuted believers assures us that the Lord can completely transform our hearts, enabling us to love blind, bigoted, and brutal hypocrites who do the devil's work in the Lord's name. Just as Christ loved His crucifiers and Stephen his murderers, we can love those, however vicious and violent, who oppose us.



Love Fulfills the Law

One day a fellow asked Jesus for a summarizing concept of the law of Moses. Could its hundreds of precepts be distilled into a few or even one? Jesus answered, in essence, "You shall love God wholeheartedly and love people unselfishly."

Paul echoed this same concept when he wrote, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The law, rightly understood, is concerned with both deeds and motives. Each of these is to be marked by genuine love for God and persons.

The love of which Christ spoke and Paul wrote is not a vague sentiment, not a mushy feeling. Neither is it mere human affection, though human affection is respected and not despised in Holy Scripture. The love that fulfills the law, the love that sets life into proper order—God first, others next, oneself last—is divine love. It is "the love of God" that is "shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5, ASV). Such love is pure, strong, outgoing, sacrificial, burden-bearing, and sin-forgiving. It fulfills the requirements of God for holy, happy, and helpful human life.

This divine love is not the product of our willing or our striving. It is the gift of God. In fact, this love encounters

a natural enemy in human nature, for the carnal mind is self-oriented and unloving. Looking out for number one is the philosophy that human nature finds congenial.

For divine love to rule our lives, our hearts must be purged from sin and selfishness. The Old Testament promises such an experience: "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart . . . so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Deut. 30:6, RSV).

The heart surgery needed by us and promised in the Old Testament is recorded as fact in the New Testament. "God . . . [gave] them the Holy Spirit . . . purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9, NKJV). In the power of that gift the early Christians faced prison, torture, and martyrdom with quenchless love for God, the Church, and even for their persecutors.

"Love divine, all loves excelling" is the result of heart cleansing, not of human resolution. Let God sanctify you wholly, and you can love the loving and the unloving, the lovely and the unlovely. Love fulfills the law.

◆ ◆ 8 ◆ ◆

Self-destruction

Benjamin Franklin wanted the Assembly of Pennsylvania to provide men and arms for the defense of Philadelphia, which was menaced by the French in 1747. The numerous Quakers, being pacifists, refused. Others who did not share these pacifist convictions also refused, unwilling to invest in a defense that would benefit the Quakers as well as themselves. This, said Franklin, reminded him of the man who refused to pump water from a sinking ship because it would save not only himself but also a shipmate whom he hated.

I know people who are unwilling to work for global peace because saving the world would include the Russians.

Some shortsighted people have destroyed the unity and peace of a church in order to strike at members whom they disliked. Later they discovered, to their sorrow, that their own children were among the casualties of a divided and weakened church.

The lengths to which hatred will go to gratify its lust for vengeance is appalling. Such destructive hatred is dangerous beyond description. It has a boomerang effect, bringing grief to the one who hurls his fury at another.

Hatred exacts too great a price. It is both destructive and self-destructive. Those who hate can always cite reasons to justify their malice—they have been unfairly treated and cruelly handled by others. The reflexive effects of hatred—the terrible toll it takes on mental and physical health—reduce their arguments to nonsense.

A loving heart and a forgiving spirit are superior to hatred in every way. Love covers sins; hate bares them. Love converts enemies to friends; hate perpetuates and deepens enmity. Love brings healing and promotes peace; hate causes injury and illness and spawns reciprocal hatred.

Just before he was beheaded, Louis XVI said, "I forgive those who are guilty of my death, and I pray God that the blood which you are about to shed may never be required of France." The mob, however, cheered when his severed head was displayed.

If you want to destroy yourself, hate. If you want wholeness, let the Lord cleanse you from hate and fill you with love.



Loving and Liking Are Not Synonyms

I recently got a letter from a woman who was defeated spiritually. The Bible commands her to love others, even

enemies. But in her neighborhood was a woman addicted to gossip, obscenity, and troublemaking. The woman who wrote me confessed that she did not feel good toward this woman, was not comfortable around her, but did try to treat her justly. Because she honestly disliked this wicked woman, she feared the Lord would disown her.

I tried to explain that love, in the New Testament sense, is not a synonym for like. Love is not an affectionate feeling; it is active goodwill, and treating people justly is one of the finest expressions of genuine love.

You can love a gossip without loving gossip. You can love a troublemaker without loving the trouble she makes. You can accept persons without approving their character or conduct. You can will for them the very best even when they are at their worst. You can do good to them even when they are doing evil to you. But this does not mean that you will enjoy their company or feel “warm and fuzzy” inside when you see them outside.

Love, in the sense that Jesus commands it of His followers, is *active goodwill*; it is not congenial emotion toward the unlovely and unloving.

Even this kind of love, which is reasonable where affection is impossible, does not come easily or naturally. We can love others as we ought to love them only when “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The indwelling Spirit is the source and power of our obedience to the love commandment.

There are some practical things that we can do to make the outflow of love surer. For one thing, we can try to understand the factors that have contributed to a person’s meanness, not to condone the meanness but to sympathize with the person. And we can pray for those who are hard to like. It is impossible not to love and appreciate those for whom we sincerely pray.

For the sake of our own spiritual health, however, we must not carry false guilt by confusing loving with liking.

◆ ◆ 10 ◆ ◆

An Aspect of Pentecostal Power

The Lord Jesus promised power to His disciples. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8, NKJV). The Book of Acts shows clearly that the power of the Holy Spirit energized the Church to bear witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

But witnessing does not exhaust the uses to which this spiritual power is put. The Holy Spirit is also power to forgive, for “the fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22), and one expression of love is forgiveness.

In his helpful little book *Climbing on Top of Your Troubles*, Berge Najarian tells of his conversion to Christ and of his subsequent infilling with the Spirit. As he completely surrendered his life and will to Christ, he says, “My whole being was permeated and saturated with His love. I felt an inner cleansing and a deep, settled peace that I never had before.”

Then follows this dramatic testimony: “Up to that time I had been harboring an unforgiving and revengeful spirit towards the Turks who had burned to death my maternal grandfather and uncle in 1895. Also, in 1920, my 85-year-old paternal grandfather and my 13-year-old brother were ruthlessly butchered in that last major massacre in Turkey when my parents escaped. But that morning my unforgiving and revengeful spirit disappeared. I could now forgive the Turks and love them because of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.”

We need that power throughout our church. How often are individual Christians hindered, and the mission of the church handicapped, by unforgiving spirits. Too many are harboring grudges, nourishing hatreds, and seeking revenge, thus poisoning their own souls and destroying the unity of the church. Whatever wrongs we have suffered, with whatever pain they have caused, we can find power to love and forgive when the Spirit cleanses and fills our hearts.

The dying Christ prayed for His tormentors, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). We can live in the spirit in which He died. Pentecost means power for witnessing but also for loving and forgiving.

♦ ♦ 11 ♦ ♦

Love Conquers

"Fight fire with fire" is the world's strategy. Respond to being hurt by imposing hurt. If someone kills your dog, stomp his cat.

This savage code is forbidden to Christians. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Jesus challenged (Mark 3:23). Smiten on the left cheek, the Christian is to offer the right cheek, not a right hook. Robbed of his coat, the Christian is to offer his shirt, not snatch another's laundry. The follower of Christ is called to respond to hatred with love, to curses with blessing, to persecution with prayer.

Christ modeled His message. He practiced what He preached. When reviled, He remained silent. When threatened, He trusted God. When crucified, He prayed for His ruthless tormentors. He not only gave His back to the smiters but also gave His heart to them and His life for them. His strategy was triumphant over sin and death. He

conquered more hearts through suffering love than anyone has through brutal force.

The example of Christ, however, is not sufficient to command a like response from us when we are maltreated. We need more than an external pattern; we need an internal power. For this, Christ is our sufficiency. He can cleanse us from sin, fill us with love, and thus enable us to act and react and interact in His Spirit, overcoming the world by returning good for evil.

Haven't you known such persons? I have. In every church I served as pastor, such Christlike persons demonstrated invincible love. I knew such persons in the colleges where I taught. Indeed, I have lived with one such person for many years.

I'm sure you have known Christians like that too. The crucial question is not, Have we known them? but, Are we such persons ourselves? This much is certain: Our opportunities to model a loving, forgiving behavior toward the obnoxious, the violent, and the cruel are frequent. The world's fires will blaze constantly. Moral arsonists abound. We can extinguish the blazes with patient, suffering love. Responding in kind only serves to explode the flames of evil into a holocaust.

Love conquers.

2

*The Spirit
of Holiness*

The Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ is present in the world and in the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the life and power of God in contact with, and in operation upon, our human lives.

Older versions of the English Bible refer to Him as the Holy Ghost. Language changes. Today the popular mind associates the word *ghost* with spookiness, something eerie and unreal, out of touch with the stuff of daily life. This has made it easy for many to regard the Holy Spirit as essentially unrelated to human life, something in the category of “things that go bump in the night.”

When I was a boy, one of our neighbors, an emotionally unstable woman, claimed to have seen the Holy Ghost. Her experience had no effect upon her life beyond scaring her witless. The Holy Spirit is not God’s way of covering us with goose bumps. He is God’s way of being present in us, dealing with our sin, altering our lives, and conforming us to the image of Christ. His ministry is our sanctification, and that makes Him essential to our lives, not accidental to them.

He comes to the believer’s heart, not as a visitor but as a resident. Living in us and loving through us, His ministry reaches out to the world. He sanctifies and empowers the Church to live and speak for Christ. This brings conviction of sin to outsiders, creates in them a hunger for life and peace and freedom, and draws them to Jesus Christ, who alone can satisfy those cravings.

The Holy Spirit can cleanse the vilest heart and empower the weakest saint. The work and witness of the Church is not totally unrelated to human personality, but the Holy Spirit achieves extraordinary feats through ordinary people. He can use beauty queens and all-star athletes and millionaire business tycoons—I know that and I’m glad

for it. But He can also use plain folks in unsung roles as well. John Doe, earning his bread on the assembly line without the benefit of college degrees, but filled with the Spirit, is worth more to the kingdom of God than some VIP who is crammed from hairline to toenails with unconsecrated ego.

♦ ♦ 13 ♦ ♦

Our Times and Our Task

The story of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, contains three significant time references: “the day of Pentecost” (v. 1), “the last days” (v. 17), and the “day of the Lord” (v. 20).

“The day of Pentecost” was the day when the Holy Spirit came in sanctifying, energizing fullness to the praying and believing disciples of Jesus.

The “day of the Lord” is the day, yet future, when Jesus shall return to judge the world in righteousness and to unite the Church to himself forever.

Between the coming of the Spirit on “the day of Pentecost” and the coming of Jesus at the “day of the Lord” lies the stretch of time known in the New Testament as “the last days.”

During “the last days” the Church lives *from its source*, “the day of Pentecost,” and lives *toward its future*, the “day of the Lord.” Its *mission* is to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus. Its *power* for achieving that purpose is the Holy Spirit, who enables the Church to bear witness to Jesus unto the ends of the earth and until the end of the age (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:20).

Just as the whole Church participates in the *hope*, so the whole Church should participate in the *task*—all of us

are to be His witnesses. The power for witnessing is available to all, not just to leaders and specialists. "They were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 4, ASV, italics added), and the promise of the Spirit's outpouring specifically includes old and young, men and women (vv. 17-18). The Holy Spirit, living in us and speaking through us, makes the feeblest human witness a power for God and good.

How many of "the last days" are left before the last day arrives? No one knows. But until the Lord comes, our business is to declare "the wonderful works of God" (v. 11), to proclaim the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as God's mighty acts of redemption.

◆ ◆ 14 ◆ ◆

The Day of Pentecost

Benjamin took the plate of fish and barley rolls from Deborah. He was late for the evening meal. His hair was damp, his eyes unnaturally bright, and a flush suffused his cheeks.

Touching his forehead, Deborah murmured, "Chicken soup I should have fixed."

"I'm not sick," he protested; "I've never been so well! Wait till I tell you about it."

"So tell." She was not a patient listener.

"Didn't you hear it this morning—the sound of a rushing mighty wind?"

"Three boys yelling, old Izaak chanting Shema at the top of his lungs, dogs snarling over garbage—I should hear wind blow?"

"This was different. A crowd gathered—"

"You in it, no doubt."

“Yes, yes! Some followers of Jesus came into the street, babbling in many dialects about God raising Him from the dead—”

“Sounds like they had too much wine.”

“That’s what someone bawled out. But this big fellow just grinned and said, ‘It’s too early in the day for us to be drunk.’ And he said Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled: God had poured out His Spirit; Jesus was the Messiah! Anyhow, 3,000 of us were baptized—”

“Us! So that’s why your hair’s wet! Benjamin, have you lost your mind?”

“No, Deborah, no! I’ve gained my soul. My sins have been forgiven. Such peace in my heart you wouldn’t believe.”

“Never mind me, you seem to believe.”

“I do, oh, I do. Your husband’s a new man. Messiah has come, Deborah! We killed Him, but God raised Him—”

“Whatever,” she broke in, shrugging. “It doesn’t affect me. It’s a man’s world. Wives don’t count in Israel.”

“Wrong, wrong, wrong! Joel said sons and daughters, men and women. Salvation is for all flesh.”

“If that’s true, Jesus will turn the world upside down.”

“He will. It has begun. A new creation is dawning! And you must be part of it—nothing else matters so much!”

❖ ❖ 15 ❖ ❖

The Abiding Presence

The Day of Pentecost has few, if any, rivals for excitement in the history of the Church.

The sound of a rushing mighty wind filled the house where the disciples were at prayer. A fireball appeared and

broke up into tongues of flame, mysteriously stationed above the head of each disciple. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples began to witness for Christ in languages they had not learned. A listening crowd marveled, and 3,000 of them were converted and baptized that day. It was a sensational event.

But the greatest value of Pentecost is not found in the inaugural signs of wind, fire, and tongues, or in the evangelistic harvest of that "opening day celebration." The greatest value of Pentecost is found in the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit has been called the alter ego—the other self—of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is our Lord's way of being present with all His people all the time.

The presence of Jesus was localized and transient. He could be in only one place at one time. For that reason, the "comfort," the inward reinforcement, of the disciples was often lost when Jesus was not with them. But in the person and power of the Spirit our Lord Jesus Christ is always present in all places and circumstances. Our hearts are permanently shored up against the pressures of life.

Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless" (John 14:18)—literally, "I will not leave you orphans!" Without Him we would be orphaned in a cruel and confusing universe, facing outward trials with inward desolation. Through the abiding Holy Spirit we have identity and security in the midst of life's changes and threats.

Wind, fire, tongues—these are exciting but dispensable. But the Comforter—the cleansing, energizing Spirit in us, for us, and with us forever—is the supreme value of Pentecost.

◆ ◆ 16 ◆ ◆

A Mighty Baptism

John the Baptizer identified Jesus as the Messiah promised through the centuries to Israel. "I baptize you with water," John said, "but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8, NIV).

This promised baptism was experienced by the first followers of Christ 10 days after the ascension of their risen Master. On the Day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival, Christ poured out upon them the Holy Spirit in a manner and measure unprecedented.

According to Scripture, the first effect of that baptism with the Spirit was the empowering of those disciples as witnesses for Christ. The Holy Spirit, Jesus had taught, "will testify of Me" (John 15:26, NKJV). The Spirit's witness to Jesus was borne through the disciples. He spoke through them, and His testimony was powerfully convincing. Indeed, 3,000 persons were converted to Christ that very day.

We learn from the unimpeachable statement of Simon Peter that this baptism accomplished another tremendous result. The hearts of the receptive disciples were "purified . . . by faith" (Acts 15:9, NIV). Purified from what? As Christ clearly affirmed, it is *sin* that defiles the inner life (Mark 7:20-23).

Three things mar fallen humanity: sin in our hearts, clay in our feet, and—to borrow a phrase from Samuel Young—wood in our heads. Only the resurrection will remedy our physical debilities. Time and education are needed to overcome our ignorance, and this process, too, will not be completed until the resurrection.

But there is a present deliverance from sin available to Christ's followers. "The blood of Jesus Christ," as an

atonement sacrifice, “cleanses us from *all sin*” (1 John 1:7, NKJV, italics added). That Atonement purchased our complete forgiveness. It provided also a total inward cleansing from sin. The heart, as the residence of the Lord, can be purified.

The Holy Spirit is Jesus’ way of living and reigning in the hearts of Christians. Bestowed in Pentecostal fullness, the Spirit cleanses, energizes, and sustains us. Pentecost was a great day and is a grand experience!

◆ ◆ 17 ◆ ◆

The Baptism with the Spirit

There is a baptism with water, and there is a baptism with the Spirit.

Every Christian should be baptized with water. This was commanded by Jesus (Matt. 28:19) and practiced by the Early Church (Acts 2:38-41).

Every Christian should also be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This was promised by the Lord (Acts 1:5) and fulfilled to the Early Church (2:4).

Those who come to be baptized with water are expected to meet certain requirements. They are called upon to repent of their sins and to believe on Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Those who desire to be baptized with the Holy Spirit are also to meet specific conditions. The Holy Spirit, in His cleansing, empowering fullness, is given to those who *ask* (Luke 11:13) and who *obey* (Acts 5:32). Insofar as this Spirit fullness is a promised gift, *faith* is also a condition (1:4).

Asking implies a desire strong enough to incite specific prayer. Obeying implies the surrender of our wills to God’s will, the death to self-will that our fathers preached about

so often and so searchingly. Believing recognizes the gift nature of the baptism with the Spirit. It acknowledges the divine initiative and the human dependence that characterize the biblical teaching on salvation.

The paragraphs above are written in full awareness of the fact that no command to be baptized with the Spirit is found in the New Testament after Pentecost. There is, however, a command to “be *filled* with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18, italics added). Acts 2:4 identifies the filling as a result of the baptism. I assume that the same divine act is necessary to produce the same human effect today.

A. W. Tozer observed that many want to be full of the Spirit but few want to be filled with the Spirit. They want to enjoy the results without meeting the conditions. The experienced fullness of the Spirit always awaits the asking, obeying, and believing. There are no shortcuts to the experience.

♦ ♦ 18 ♦ ♦

A Spirit of Shaking

In his *Journal*, Charles Wesley tells of a man named Abraham Staples who was saved while listening to Wesley preach from the words, “Lazarus, come forth.” Then and there he was called from his death in sin to a new life of faith in Christ.

Testifying to Mr. Wesley three weeks later, the convert said, “I felt that my sins were forgiven, by a peace and warmth within me, which have continued ever since.”

Wesley answered, “Then you know that the Spirit of God is a Spirit of burning?”

“Yes,” Staples replied, “and a Spirit of shaking, too, for He turns me upside down.”

Every sinner needs to be turned upside down in order to be right side up. Sin distorts what it does not destroy, and salvation brings a new relationship to God, to people, and to things. Part of the Christian's new life is a new value system, governed by the concept of Christ as Lord and the believer as steward.

It takes a mighty shaking to wrench a sinner from his sins. Sometimes it takes a mighty shaking to rouse the church from lethargy and worldliness. But the Holy Spirit is the greatest of all "movers and shakers" at work in our world. He loves us too much to leave us alone in our sins or in our sleep.

John Chrysostom viewed an earthquake as an expression of "the goodness and severity of God," His severity in shaking the solid earth, His goodness in supporting the shaken earth. Precisely because He is good, God will shake us as severely as necessary to save us from our sin and folly. Even as we endure the shaking, we ought to praise Him for His goodness.

Paul and his coworkers were accused of having "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). This was cogent evidence that the Spirit of God was at work through their ministry. When Christ died, an earthquake shook the area, and some dead people were restored to life, according to Matt. 27:51-53. The message of "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23) has power to bring sinners from their spiritual tombs and to turn their lives upside down.

The Spirit of God is a Spirit of shaking!

◆ ◆ 19 ◆ ◆

Power for Witness

From the time I united with the church, shortly after my conversion, I was interested in the outpouring of the Holy

Spirit, recorded in Acts 2, as an experience available to present-day Christians. Nearly every message I heard on the subject emphasized the cleansing of the believer's heart through the abiding presence of the Spirit.

I was surprised to discover, when reading Acts, that you get halfway through the book before you learn that anyone's heart was purified by the Spirit's coming on the Day of Pentecost. In chapter 15 we have Peter's testimony that the gift of the Spirit "purified [the disciples'] hearts by faith" (v. 9, NIV). Cleansing is mentioned almost incidentally in Acts.

What is emphasized throughout Acts is the Holy Spirit as power for service—especially for witnessing to Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts describes the growth of the Church through the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Spirit. Accent falls upon a widening circle of witness-bearing that produces a constant growth in the number of people who turn from sin to follow Christ.

Perhaps those first disciples only gradually realized the radical cleansing that had occurred. They became aware of different attitudes and responses to misunderstanding, opposition, and threat. Old jealousies, ambitions, fears, and hate were gone, replaced by overflowing love.

In any case, the first recorded and often repeated effect of Pentecost was the constitution of the Church as a witnessing community. Perhaps churches would be holier, healthier, and happier with this emphasis restored. A church not turned outward in witnessing will soon be turned inward in negative and destructive criticism.

When churches do not grow, they often feud. Where they do not confront the world with the gospel, they often whack each other with the *Manual*. Morbid introspection is often the consequence of neglected evangelism. When new blood is not received, the old blood tends to clot and dry.

I am not suggesting an either-or but a both-and, with the emphasis where Scripture places it. Purity of heart and power for service are not exclusive. They are two sides of the same coin minted in heaven. Where either is absent, counterfeiters are at work. Where both are present, Christ is at work.

♦ ♦ 20 ♦ ♦

Love Is Forgiving

The essence of holiness is love, and the noblest expression of love is forgiveness.

I thought of that recently when reading *The Long Surrender*, by Burke Davis, one of America's ablest Civil War historians. Following the defeat of the Confederacy, its greatest soldier declared that he felt no resentment toward his foes. Robert E. Lee said, "I believe I may say, looking into my own heart, and speaking as in the presence of God, that I have never known one moment of bitterness or resentment."

What a contrast was Edmund Ruffin, the "firebrand of secession." Just before he stuck a rifle barrel in his mouth and shot himself to death, the bitter old man declared his "unmitigated hatred" for "the perfidious, malignant, and vile Yankee race." His final diary entry expressed his wish that he could bequeath that implacable hatred to every Southerner then living, and to all who would be born later.

I thought of love's power to forgive, too, when I read H. B. Dehqani-Tafti's book *The Hard Awakening*, an account of Christian suffering under oppressive rulers in Iran. Dehqani-Tafti is the first native Iranian to become bishop of the Episcopal Church of Iran. His own son, a college teacher, was murdered by the revolutionaries now controlling Iran.

Though his sorrow seared him to the center of his being, Dehqani-Tafti refused to hate the murderers. In a prayer composed the day before his son's funeral, he wrote, "When his murderers stand before Thee on the day of judgment . . . forgive."

If holiness is "pure love alone reigning in the heart," as Wesley taught, and if love is power to forgive, how can those who profess holiness excuse an unforgiving spirit? How can they harbor grudges and nourish resentments, refusing to forgive those who have wronged them? Some of them have split churches and retarded evangelism by their bitter, petty, self-centered refusals to forgive.

Christ prayed for His killers, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). In the light of His cross, we cannot vindicate a profession of holiness unsupported by a pardoning love.

♦ ♦ 21 ♦ ♦

Strange Clothes

The pastor quoted Judg. 6:34: "The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." He then explained, "A more literal translation would be, 'The Spirit of the Lord *clothed himself with Gideon.*'"

The Holy Spirit consents to wear some strange clothes! He is willing to garb himself with any and all of the followers of Jesus Christ. Whatever our limitations and oddities, the Spirit will indwell us and employ us as instruments of the gospel.

Recently I spied a battered panel truck bearing this impudent sign: "You are ugly, and your mother dresses you funny." Insults are viewed as chic in some circles today.

But think how oddly the Spirit dresses at times when He consents to wear our humanity! When “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), that was an act of great condescension. At least, though, “the Word” was incarnate in the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ. Talk about condescension—the Holy Spirit clothes himself with our imperfect, tragicomic personalities. Now there is a lesson in humility!

“Clothes,” it has been affirmed, “make the man.” That is often untrue. A crook in clerical vestments is not sanctified by his garb. An honest man in patched overalls is better than a gangster in silk suits.

Clothed with us, the Holy Spirit retains the perfection of His divine being. We who become His clothing are changed, for His presence is purifying as well as energizing. Yet, even cleansed humanity is rumpled and seedy this side of the resurrection. That the Spirit would dwell in us and work with us is a tribute to divine grace, not to human worth.

In one of my pastorates a woman came to church each week in very original dresses. She made her own and used some combinations of fabrics and colors that were a frequent source of amused comment. Looking back on the situation, I realized that the Holy Spirit wore the strangest clothes of all. He became enfleshed in the saints! Thank God that He isn't too proud to wear some patched, wrinkled, and unstylish attire.

♦ ♦ 22 ♦ ♦

The Spirit Brings Order

The first reference to the Spirit of God in Holy Scripture describes Him as moving over the face of primeval waters

that covered a dark and formless earth, the initial step in preparing earth for human habitation (Gen. 1:2).

Where the Spirit of God is at work, chaos becomes cosmos. In nature, in human personality, and in social relationships the Spirit exerts His wisdom and power to produce harmony and order.

He is the Wind that blows away dust, the Fire that consumes dross, the Oil that reduces friction. He is the Spirit of love, peace, and holiness. From the beginning He has been at work to bring order out of disorder, to render nature and people fit to live with.

Brooding over primeval chaos, He brought light, balance, harmony—a blending of the elements that created conditions favorable for life.

Brooding over ruined lives, He produces beauty and value. That which was wasted becomes useful. That which was sordid becomes chaste. That which was empty becomes purposeful.

Brooding over homes and churches, He orients life around the will of God, enabling people to serve one another in love. Lust, greed, and force are remedied to create purity, kindness, and gentility, making life together holy and happy.

Wherever order becomes disorder, wherever love and peace and holiness give way to hatred, division, and corruption, you can be sure that another spirit is at work.

Evil spirits fill homes with contention. Husbands bully wives, mothers exploit children, children practice cruelty toward one another when unholy spirits prevail.

Evil and carnal spirits fill churches with strife. Pastors and congregations adopt adversarial roles. Power-crazed persons, grasping for position, strip the church of unction and blessing.

Order, peace, and love depend upon the work of the Holy Spirit as He moves graciously and mightily over the

stormy surface of our disordered lives. He will bring health and beauty to every human relationship. Come, Holy Spirit!

♦ ♦ 23 ♦ ♦

Our Greatest Need

In the churches where I have preached in recent years, I have insisted that our greatest need is not more money, more buildings, more equipment, or even more people. Rather, our topmost need is a fresh, mighty, compelling baptism with the Holy Spirit. His cleansing and energizing effect upon us will generate the power, purity, and passion required for achieving our mission.

The church is both a spiritual organism and a social organization. As an organization it is subject to an aging process that results in tired blood, wrinkled skin, and deteriorating muscle. From time to time it must be rejuvenated by fresh measures of the divine power that created its fellowship and launched its ministry. The Holy Spirit is, as Walter Rauschenbusch once put it, “the Fountain of Youth for the Church.”

From that Fountain we must drink constantly, or we will become flabby, senile, and weak, unable to engage the enemy, conquer his forces, and release his captives. God is always doing what He can to reach the world through the Church. He can only do more through us, therefore, when He has done more *in* us. Renewal is the condition of advance and growth. That renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, according to Scripture, is given to those who *ask* and *obey* (Luke 11:13 and Acts 5:32). This is true for our initial experience of His fullness and for our repeated experiences of His fullness. To gather the church for prayer—

searching our hearts, confessing our sins, imploring God's forgiveness and cleansing, and committing our resources to His mission—would achieve more than our next 10 conferences or seminars. The Holy Spirit would be poured out anew, and we would become an invincible people.

The best machinery available is useless without power. Power for the church's task is God's gift to praying and obeying Christians. The Holy Spirit is that power, and moral power cannot be divorced from repentance, consecration, prayer, and faith.

Our greatest need is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

♦ ♦ 24 ♦ ♦

Seeing the Spirit

When I was a boy in Miami, we had a next-door neighbor who was very religious but not very sensible. One morning, in excited tones, she told my mother, "I saw the Holy Ghost last night." She went on to describe a mysterious white figure that was moving about in the yard. Mother laughed. What the nearly hysterical woman had seen was my dad. Clad in nightclothes, he had charged outside to chase off some noisy cats.

Obviously she couldn't see the Holy Spirit. *Spirit*, by definition, is immaterial and invisible. When the Holy Spirit fills the disciples of Christ, however, something becomes visible and audible in their lives that makes His presence known. On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to the gathered crowd, he said, "This Jesus . . . having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit . . . has poured forth this *which you both see and hear*" (Acts 2:32-33, NASB, italics added).

What Jesus Christ “poured forth” was the Holy Spirit (v. 17). What the crowd saw and heard were the effects of the Spirit’s controlling, energizing presence in the lives of the disciples.

They saw men who once fled in fear now boldly standing up for Jesus Christ (v. 14). The Holy Spirit produces moral courage. He stiffens the spines of people until they will face opposition, prison, and even death rather than desert the Lord.

They saw men and women who pooled their resources to make sure no member of the Church was hungry or homeless (vv. 44-45). The Holy Spirit turns “owners” into stewards. He conquers selfishness and begets compassion. He destroys greed and creates generosity. Spirit-filled people exercise an evident concern for the needy.

They heard limited disciples proclaiming an exciting, unlimited message—“the mighty deeds of God” (v. 11, NASB). Jesus Christ has promised the Holy Spirit as power for witness-bearing. When He fills the heart, He loosens the tongue to speak of the Savior. A Spirit-filled church will faithfully proclaim the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as the saving acts of God.

We cannot see the Spirit, but we can see and hear what He effects in people’s lives.

❖ ❖ 25 ❖ ❖

Love

“The fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22).

“God *is* love” (1 John 4:8, 16, italics added), and the Spirit’s ministry is designed to produce the Father’s likeness in His children’s lives. We become what God has always been.

Love engendered and nourished by the Spirit is deeper and nobler than natural affection. Evil hearts can love, but not in the manner and measure that Spirit-filled hearts love. "The world would love its own," Jesus said (John 15:19, ASV). Evil men find it difficult to love good men. But God's children are taught to love their enemies, pray for their persecutors, and overcome evil with good.

John Henry Jowett preached from the text, "I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy" (Ps. 7:4). The sermon was titled "Noble Revenge," and the outline is masterful: (1) Evil for good is devillike; (2) evil for evil is beastlike; (3) good for good is manlike; (4) good for evil is godlike. Only in the power of the Spirit can we exercise this "noble revenge." In hearts conquered by grace and filled with God, love stretches to such limits.

God bore such love toward fallen humanity. Jesus once remarked, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). That is the remotest boundary of human affection. Such love can be glorious. It inspires the mother's devotion to her children's needs, the soldier's defiance of death for his country's honor, and the courting of danger by rescue parties searching for disaster victims.

Divine love reaches farther. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (v. 10). Divine love is strong enough to be torn by lashes, pierced with nails, stabbed by a spear, and still pray with swollen tongue through blood-drenched lips, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

It is this transcendent and triumphant love that the Holy Spirit develops within those whose hearts He fills and possesses. Their rain of intercessory tears falls upon the unjust, and their sun of unsolicited kindness shines upon the evil. The Father's love is mirrored in His children's lives.

♦ ♦ 26 ♦ ♦

Joy

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy” (Gal. 5:22).

Men without God can know a measure of happiness. There are “pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). The Spirit-filled have joy. Joy is more than happiness. Happiness depends on happenings. It is created or destroyed by circumstances. Joy results from a conscious right relationship to God, a deep inward satisfaction independent of circumstances.

The joy produced by the Spirit is inexpressible. “You rejoice,” wrote Peter, “with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Such indescribable joy results from loving and believing in Jesus Christ. Those who know it can no more describe it to others than you could picture the glories of a sunset to an unsighted friend.

The Spirit’s joy is irrepressible. “With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation,” cried Isaiah. “And in that day shall you say, Praise the Lord” (12:3-4). Praise is an artesian well, uncappable and inexhaustible, in the soul of a redeemed person. The devil may as well try to confine the thunderous waters of Niagara with a bottle cap as to try to suppress a sanctified man’s joy.

This joy is unquenchable. A hardy plant, it thrives even where scorching suns of criticism shine and withering winds of persecution blow. The Sanhedrin scourged the apostles and released them under threat of death for preaching Jesus. Those tortured men “departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).

Like all tough plants, though, joy must be cultivated. Its roots are watered by prayer. “Ask, and you shall receive,” challenged Jesus, “that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

Its stalk is fed by Scripture. "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Its blooms are opened by obedience. "The kingdom of God is . . . joy" (Rom. 14:17); and the godly man's "delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:2). Evil men are happy only when they have their own way. Believers are joyful when God has His way!

And joy is a perennial. It endures all ages and survives all changes, for its source is God. "In Your presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11, NKJV). The unchanging God assures abiding joy.

◆ ◆ 27 ◆ ◆

Peace

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace" (Gal. 5:22).

Ours is a peace-hungry age. Any book promising a solution to strife and anxiety becomes a best-seller. Human remedies have failed, however. Despite the psychiatrist's couch and tranquilizing drugs, the world's grasp for peace has left it clutching the apple of discord.

God is "the God of peace." He yearns to restore order and harmony to our chaotic world. Calvary was His peace-making mission. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). "He is our peace," wrote a Jewish apostle to Gentile converts, "who has made us both one" (Eph. 2:14, RSV). The Cross provides our peace with God and with one another.

The Spirit came to execute the provisions of the Cross. The legacy of Christ—"My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27)—was given in connection with the promise of the Spirit's coming. By convicting of sin, drawing to Christ, and filling our hearts, the Holy Spirit creates peace.

Sin is the cause of dispeace. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21). Peace is impossible until sin is conquered. For this reason, the risen Christ, with the marks of the Cross in His hands, could say to His disciples, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). And Paul could write, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

A convert's peace is not complete. He finds within a disturber of the peace. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). When the believer is "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (15:16, ASV), this enmity is slain and inward peace abounds. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess. 5:23) is a prayer whose answer fills the heart with peace.

This peace becomes our strength and security. "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). God's peace is a sentry on guard at the gate to the heart.

As the Holy Spirit abides, our peace deepens and multiplies. Peace with God, peace with others, and peace within ourselves is the rich and lovely fruit of the Spirit.

❖ ❖ 28 ❖ ❖

Patience

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . longsuffering" (Gal. 5:22).

In our busy, active lives few things come harder than waiting. This is especially true if we are suffering while we wait. Yet, the Holy Spirit can tame our pacing hearts, quiet our jangled nerves, and create a trust in God that enables us to patiently endure the most adverse circumstances.

We need patience with God. Sometimes He seems to work so slowly, if at all, to change our situations. We pray, but nothing seems to happen. We seize upon scriptures that seem to promise relief, but the trouble continues. Act *now*, our panicky hearts silently scream to God, as each fitful night closes another day without rescue. God keeps His own counsel, works by His own methods, and follows His own schedule.

We need patience with others. If only people would listen to us! How stubborn, exasperating, and unwise they can be! We want to help them, or to be helped by them, but they seem so indifferent to our advice and appeals. Get on with it! Stop dragging your feet! Shape up! Still they hesitate, stumble around, blunder along, or even rebel. Only the oil of the Spirit can reduce the friction that would erupt into flame and destroy relationships.

We need patience with ourselves. Many Christians are harder on themselves than on others. Toward others they try to be understanding, forgiving, and patient with failure. From themselves they demand perfect performance and are intolerant with less. To have the same attitude toward ourselves that the Lord has toward us will promote spiritual health.

Sin, sorrow, sickness, and suffering—our own or that of others—call for long-suffering. Every nerve-stretching, energy-sapping experience through which we pass calls for patience. We can have it, in growing measure, if the Spirit abides. Patience is the fruit of His presence and control.

“I waited patiently for the Lord,” the Psalmist wrote; “and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry” (40:1). To endure in love and faith until that becomes our testimony requires the patience of the Holy Spirit.

◆ ◆ 29 ◆ ◆

Kindness

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness” (Gal. 5:22).

Most of our modern English translations read “kindness,” and that is the best rendering of the Greek word used by Paul.

This word is used to describe God’s saving actions toward sinners. Paul writes of “the riches” of that kindness, which is designed to lead sinners to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God’s kindness to us “through Jesus Christ” is what makes possible our salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:7, TLB; Titus 3:4-6). This kindness is the opposite of His “severity” by which sin is justly punished (Rom. 11:22).

Christians, “as the elect of God,” are to “put on” this kindness (Col. 3:12). In Paul’s own life, it became one of the traits by which his ministry was commended (2 Cor. 6:6). A British scholar defines the Greek term as “graciousness,” and comments, “In men it is the sympathetic kindliness or sweetness of temper that puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain.”

Such kindness, then, means treating those who sin against us in the same way God has treated us. Kindness is the disposition that underlies the forgiveness of sins. Instead of demanding and delivering the deserved punishment, kindness offers pardon and peace to the offender.

To exhibit toward others the graciousness that God has shown toward us is the fruit of the Spirit. He is the moral power that makes kindness possible. The heart of man, by nature, desires vengeance. It wants its pound of flesh. The heart, by grace, prefers to forgive, to effect reconciliation, to convert the enemy into a friend. The Holy Spirit, filling our hearts and controlling our lives, enables us to treat others as God has treated us.

We are commanded, “Be . . . kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). Kindness prompts forgiveness, and that is the outgrowth of the Spirit’s indwelling.

Offenses are bound to come. The Holy Spirit will help us meet them with forbearing and forgiving love—with kindness.

◆ ◆ 30 ◆ ◆

Goodness

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness” (Gal. 5:22).

The word Paul used for goodness is found only in three other places in the New Testament, all of them from his pen.

In Rom. 15:14 he describes the Christians at Rome as “full of goodness.” In Eph. 5:9 he identifies goodness as “the fruit of the Spirit.” In 2 Thess. 1:11 he prays that God may fulfill all the purposes of goodness.

The Greek word is a bit hard to define. One famous lexicon calls it “generosity,” and that is how J. B. Phillips translated it. In his classic on Galatians, John Brown uses a happy phrase—“a disposition to oblige.”

The Holy Spirit overcomes our natural selfishness and creates within us a disposition to oblige, “to do good to the bodies and souls of men to the utmost of our ability,” as Adam Clarke comments.

Although the word itself is seldom used in the New Testament, the concept is profusely illustrated there.

The actions of the Good Samaritan supply a demonstration of this fruit of the Spirit. Rescuing the victim of bandits, binding up his wounds, taking him to an inn for further care, and footing the bill himself—that is goodness.

The clothes that Tabitha made for widows, mentioned in Acts 9:39, were visible expressions of the invisible disposition.

The generosity of Barnabas, who sold land and gave the money to help the poor within the Church, marks him as a good man (Acts 4:36-37).

The supreme illustrations of goodness are the works of Jesus. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and preached to the poor out of deep kindness that overflowed in doing good.

Uprightness, kindness, generosity—these are synonyms for that obliging disposition that results from the Spirit's control of our lives. It is the opposite of selfishness. Goodness turns life outward in service to others.

♦ ♦ 31 ♦ ♦

Faithfulness

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith” (Gal. 5:22).

Every modern English translation I consulted reads “faithfulness,” except the NEB, which reads “fidelity”—the same thing. Commentators agree with translators. Paul has reference here, not to the act of faith by which one is justified, but to the life of faithfulness by which faith is demonstrated.

To be a faithful person is to be dependable, responsible, honest, loyal. Faithfulness describes the person who serves the Lord through thick and thin.

Scripture declares that “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13). The Spirit of God, residing in our hearts and presiding over our lives, reproduces in us the character of God.

Faithfulness will be severely tested. If you think that Christianity is a bed of roses, remember that Christ wore a crown of thorns. By every means at his disposal, Satan

will attempt to wrest us from the Lord. For that reason we are exhorted, "Be faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10, RSV). The fruit of the Spirit is a loyalty to Christ and His Church that prefers death to dishonor or desertion.

In the Judgment, our Lord's highest commendation will be, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:23). By the Spirit's life within us, we can be "faithful to the Lord" (Acts 16:15), which simply means continuing obedience to "the faithful word" by which He feeds us and leads us (Titus 1:9).

Such fidelity requires more than human resolution and courage. Simon Peter was sure of his loyalty to Jesus. Why, he would die rather than deny Him! But deny Him he did when the pressure became intense. The breach of fidelity filled his heart with shame and his eyes with tears. Then came the Day of Pentecost, when Simon Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. From then on, he faced courts, prisons, torture, and death without wavering.

We can be loyal to the Lord, whatever the circumstances of trouble and threat we are passing through, if we are filled with the Spirit.

♦ ♦ 32 ♦ ♦

Meekness

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Meekness is not a product of "the natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14). By nature people are vain, haughty, arrogant, and cursed with an exaggerated sense of their own importance. Many able theologians regard pride as the basal sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), but defiance of

God's law results from pride, the feeling that we can direct our lives better than God can.

The Spirit of God opposes pride and produces meekness. Meekness is that rare grace that enables one to see himself as he really is. It makes one aware of weakness, ignorance, and evil in human life and causes him to depend on God for victory over these forces.

Meekness enables one to look with sympathy on the failures of other people. The meek can achieve success without strutting and endure failure without whining. True meekness keeps the soul balanced, neither exalted by the heady wine of applause nor discouraged by the depressing drugs of criticism.

Meekness and weakness are not synonyms. They stand poles apart. To be meek is not to be spineless and spiritless. It involves what Adam Clarke describes as "patient suffering of injuries without feeling a spirit of revenge." That was a characteristic beautifully demonstrated by Jesus Christ, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). He endured the agony of the Cross with such heroism that a tough Roman soldier exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). Such courage, such controlled strength, is the essence of meekness.

Any proud fool can fight fire with fire. Only the valorous meek can overcome evil with good. History's supreme example of meekness is not Casper Milquetoast; it is Jesus Christ, who prayed from the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). A weak man would have raged and cursed, or whimpered and begged.

The Holy Spirit will create this quiet, gentle strength in the lives of those who submit to His control. And these "shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

♦ ♦ 33 ♦ ♦

Self-control

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23).

“Temperance” here means self-control, and it has special reference to our impulses and appetites. The Holy Spirit helps us to discipline ourselves so that our lives are governed by God’s Word, not by our whims and wishes.

Self-control is not self-created. Against the blind strength of our physical appetites, our resolutions and efforts are overmatched. We need a power greater than our own to make and keep us pure. That power is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us as a restraining force against temptation.

Self-control is an expression of love. It is love exercising restraint and wisdom when appetites and desires are aroused. The Spirit creates and increases within us a love for God that is our best defense against sin. We love Him too much to disobey or betray Him by wrongfully indulging our desires.

A splendid Old Testament illustration of this power of love to keep life under control morally is furnished by Joseph. As a normal, healthy young man he was confronted by a married woman who urged him to become her partner in adultery. Sexual appetite is blind. It cannot read moral codes or marriage licenses. But Joseph did not allow his physical desires to dictate his response in the situation. Why? Here are his own words: “How . . . can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). He loved God too much to “make love” with Potiphar’s wife.

Jesus, filled with the Spirit, entered the wilderness of temptation. After a 40-day fast, He was intensely hungry. He possessed a self-control, however, that enabled Him to repel the tempter’s suggestion to turn stones into bread. He chose to live by the Word of God. Devotion to the Father’s will was greater than hunger for bread.

Disciplined living calls for a control center impervious to the caprice of impulse and the clamor of appetite. That control center is the Holy Spirit, a purifying, energizing, guiding Presence within us. He makes self-control possible in a world where self-expression and self-indulgence are rife.

❖ ❖ 34 ❖ ❖

Come, Holy Spirit!

We sang a prayer chorus for the Spirit's coming, ending with the lines, "Come in Thine own gentle way."

After the service Paul Bassett, whom I am pleased to call my friend and teacher, said to me, "He may not always want to come gently. He may want to come as a rushing mighty wind."

Yes! That is how He came at Pentecost. On Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit descended as a dove. On the disciples He came as fire. There was nothing to be burned away in the heart of Christ, but sin must be flame-purged from ours. The Spirit may come upon the perfect Christ as a gentle breeze, for there is nothing about Jesus that needs to be swept away. But the Spirit may need to come upon us as a strong wind, to separate the chaff from the wheat.

When I left the house of God, I went to my study and read again these lines from George MacDonald:

*Lord, in Thy Spirit's hurricane, I pray,
Strip my soul naked—dress it then Thy way.*

My thoughts moved on to Paul's words in Eph. 4:22, 24: "Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires . . . put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (NIV).

The figure used is that of changing clothes, undressing and redressing. The "old man," the person you were be-

fore Christ, must be exchanged for the “new man,” the person you are in Christ. Deceitful lusts must give way to holy living. This radical transformation may require more than a gentle current of air! To strip away the old, dirty rags and to dress one’s life in “cloth of gold” may demand the Spirit’s “hurricane.”

That the Spirit comes—to renew, to cleanse, to empower, to sustain—that is what matters. *How* He comes can be safely left to His wisdom. Other prayer lines from MacDonald are appropriate:

Come to me, Lord: I will not speculate how . . .

But cry, Come, Lord, come any way, come now.



3

*Cleansing and
Commitment*

No Snow Job on Sin

While I am writing this, snow is falling here in New England where I live. It has continued all day, covering the earth with a soft white beauty and decorating trees and shrubs beyond an artist's power to depict.

But it makes me think also of a phrase that has entered our vocabulary—*snow job*. When a salesman covers up the truth about the defects of his merchandise and persuades an unwitting customer to buy it, we call that sales pitch a snow job. That is the name we give to a politician's promise if it is made insincerely in order to garner votes.

A bit of verse called "Snowfall" puts it like this:

*How gently is hushed
The city's mad roar!
How silently grime
Is blanketed o'er!*

*Filth has been conquered,
One almost believes,
Until the next thaw
Rudely undeceives!*

After a snowfall the landscape may appear to be cleansed of all its grime, filth, and pollution. But warmer days will melt the snow, and all the old rubbish will be exposed.

There are some who think God deals with sin in this way. Sin is not removed, merely covered over, and God is not supposed to see it through the merciful covering of Christ's atonement. But God doesn't do a snow job on sin. He can and will cleanse the hearts of His people from sin, making them inwardly pure and morally strong.

Various political scandals, including Watergate, have made us keenly aware of cover-up as a human strategy of

deception. God's way is cleanup. Our hearts are to be holy temples, not snowcapped manure piles.

♦ ♦ 36 ♦ ♦

Christian Perfection

The church that is captive to the Word of God must be committed to the doctrine of Christian perfection.

In Matt. 5:48 Jesus commands, "Be ye . . . perfect." In Heb. 13:20-21 the writer prays, "The God of peace . . . make you perfect." Such scriptures occur rather frequently. Some sort of perfection is plainly taught in the Bible as a possible experience.

Many who oppose the doctrine assign to the term an absolute meaning. Perfection, as they define it, marks the end of all weakness and all progress. It is repeatedly said that if Christians are made perfect, they can no longer sin, or grow, or be tempted, or need the Lord's prayer, etc., etc., etc.

We have answered repeatedly and emphatically that Scripture uses the term in a relative sense. It is useless to deny that perfection is commanded, promised, and illustrated in the Bible. It is senseless to believe that God expects of us the perfection of angels in heaven or even of Adam in Eden. He certainly does not expect of us absolute perfection, for He alone is absolutely perfect.

Christian perfection is not a matter of maturity or of finality. According to the passage in Hebrews, perfection conditions us inwardly to do the will of God. The term as used in the New Testament suggests the elimination of discord, the setting of a dislocated joint, or the mending of a broken object. Something is restored or equipped to do what

it was meant to do. Christian perfection is the cleansing, adjusting, and ordering of the inner life, which harmonizes it with the will of God.

With imperfect bodies and defective minds we will not do God's will without mistakes, but we can embrace His will without resentment and rebellion. This is what we mean by Christian perfection, no more, no less.

But how can the perfect yet be imperfect? Ask a green apple.

♦ ♦ 37 ♦ ♦

Perfect or Blameless?

John Wesley preached and taught a doctrine of Christian perfection. He based it squarely on Scripture and found it confirmed in hundreds of witnesses.

For decades Wesley patiently persevered in proclaiming, explaining, and defending the doctrine, for it was ridiculed, distorted, rejected, and denied wherever he went.

Those who objected to the very words *perfect* and *perfection* he gently reproved. The terms were in the Bible, he reminded them. Shall He who formed the tongue be sent to school and taught language by critics?

Today, those who oppose the doctrine find one snag removed, or so they think at first. Modern English translations substitute *blameless* for *perfect*. So many have insisted on giving *perfect* an absolute meaning—that which cannot be improved—that it was thought prudent to translate the Hebrew and Greek terms by *blameless* or *complete*.

While a less offensive term may be employed, the question is not thereby resolved. Those who jeered and said, "No one can be perfect," are unlikely to concede that any-

one can be blameless. The issue is still the degree to which we can be saved from sin in this life, and the doctrinal battlefields have the same ancient perimeters—except that now we call them parameters.

Scripture teaches cleansing from all sin. It affirms the possibility of “pure love alone reigning in the heart.” Our lives can be devoted to Christ utterly and supremely. The law of God can be written on our hearts, conforming our inner lives to His will, thus enabling us to do His will, not without mistake but without resentment and rebellion. Whether that is termed being perfect or being blameless is a semantic question. Whether God provides such cleansing and energizing grace for this life is the theological issue.

Our mission is to affirm that He does, and we are responsible for appropriating and demonstrating that grace by faith. The written Word of God still needs to be complemented by living witnesses, as Wesley saw so clearly.

◆ ◆ 38 ◆ ◆

A Perfect Man

God himself called Job “a perfect . . . man” (1:8; 2:3). And God defined that perfection: Job avoided evil and revered God.

Satan denied Job’s perfection. He took his argument from the outer realm to the inner realm, from conduct to motive. Job may appear blameless in what he does, Satan contended, but he serves God from ulterior motives. He honors God and shuns evil because God hedges his life with blessings. Remove the hedge and Job will renounce God.

Satan’s denial slandered God as well as Job. It implied that God was ignorant of Job’s motives. It implied that God would buy affection. What a cheeky old reprobate the devil is!

Ensuing events clearly showed that Job was not absolutely perfect. He was certainly not physically perfect, covered as he was with open sores that racked his frame with constant pain. Nor was he mentally perfect; he confessed that his turn of events—from riches to rags, from health to illness—was beyond his understanding. He wasn't spiritually perfect, not in the sense of being full-grown. He became a wiser and better man for having passed through his trials than he was before they began. No, he was perfect only in the sense that God declared him perfect—a man who clung to God and refused evil.

God certainly knows what He is talking about. On the other hand, Satan “is a liar” and has been “from the beginning” (John 8:44). With his limitations, Satan doesn't get as much experience doing evil as God gets doing good, but he's in there trying!

So here's the picture. God affirms perfection, a perfection possible to a person in this life, even under tragic circumstances. And Satan denies perfection, insisting that love for God and hatred for evil are flawed by self-serving motives. Which side of the issue are you on? In your own experience? In your own creed? In your own preaching and teaching? What receives your “amen”—God's affirmation or Satan's denial?

♦ ♦ 39 ♦ ♦

Radical Remedy

“Dead cats carry no fleas.” That is a truth by which I seek to live where sin is concerned.

Where I once pastored, the building became infested with fleas. We prayed and sprayed, but the irritating insects persisted, worshipping with us with a regularity that

put some members to shame—and kept some awake. How embarrassing to have visitors leave your church with undesirable hitchhikers on their socks!

Finally we discovered the source of our discomfort. A gaunt, mangy-looking stray cat of dubious ancestry had taken up residence in the building. It slept boldly by night and hid cleverly by day. The cat was dispatched—justifiable euthanasia—and the fleas abandoned the premises. Admittedly, the cure was radical, but it sure was effective.

The only way to deal with sin is to kill the cat. Trying to cure sin by working on its consequences is like catching fleas one at a time; you never solve the problem, you just exercise the options.

Cutting down doesn't solve the alcoholic's problem; only abstinence does. Tapering off doesn't solve the smoker's health risk; only quitting does. A one-pack cancer is as fatal as a three-pack cancer. An embezzler doesn't become honest by palming \$10.00s rather than \$100s; he merely reduces his ill-gotten gains. A gossip isn't cured by talking to just one neighbor at a time. Illustrations could be multiplied, but the point is obvious. Counting or chasing the fleas is poor comfort; getting rid of the carrier is the only way to clear the building.

God proposes a radical cleansing from sin. Endless pardons for endlessly repeated transgressions is not His plan. He offers an in-depth cleansing of the heart. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NKJV). The power by which the heavens and earth were created can create in us a clean heart and renew in us a right spirit (Ps. 51:10). A holy heart makes possible a holy life.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). The rest are doomed to scratch fleabites.

❖ ❖ 40 ❖ ❖

Rough Exit, Glorious Road

Jesus calls us to live. Jesus calls us to die.

“I came that they might have life,” He declared of His mission on earth (John 10:10, NASB).

“Take up [your] cross, and follow me,” He demands of His followers (Mark 10:21) and the cross is an instrument of death.

Is this a contradiction? No, for the life He offers is risen life, and the resurrection is beyond the crucifixion. You cannot have the one without the other.

In the throes of dying to self-will, a young pastor sobbed and groaned, “It’s so hard to die.” A friend, praying with him, gently replied, “Yes, but it’s the only way to resurrection life.” Jesus takes us to the cross, but He does not leave us impaled there. He shares with us His risen life, life triumphant over sin, over demonic forces, over tempting circumstances, over human opposition, over spiritual barrenness. Through death to life is the way to Christ.

This was Paul’s experience, to which he testifies in Gal. 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (NKJV). Unless you undergo that death to self-will, you can never experience the power and joy of Christ living in you and through you.

Such death is seldom swift and never easy. Self has relished its control too long to yield the driver’s seat without a struggle. Sin within will fight like a cornered rat against its threatened extermination. The “old man” will lie, dodge, alibi, negotiate, compromise—anything to remain alive. The carnal mind will consent to any truce if it can only elude

the cross. We must resolutely, by faith, bind the victim, drive the nails, and refuse its whining pleas to be spared.

Death to self-will must be affirmed and expressed in the tests of daily living. In the moment of temptation, in the appeal to self-indulgence, we must declare by lips and life, "I am crucified with Christ." The cross leads to the risen life. A rough exit puts us on a glorious road.

❖ ❖ 41 ❖ ❖

The Warring Heart

I would like to believe that men who glory in war are a vanishing breed, but that is wishful thinking. Fallen man is essentially violent, lusting for power and prone to destruction. Even peaceniks have sometimes demonstrated a willingness to hurt and kill in order to make their point! The hawk outsoars the dove in human nature.

This is true of men, not only en masse but as individuals. The belligerence of people is expressed, often violently, each day. Aggression and revenge-seeking are too common to require documentation. Striking out and getting even are ways of life.

The reason for this lies in the native depravity of the human heart. At the core of being we are twisted out of joint with God and cannot, therefore, relate peacefully to others or to ourselves. Pride and insecurity fill us with distrust and suspicion. Selfishness distorts vision and warps values, causing others to appear as threats to our happiness or even to our existence. Consequently, a get-before-you-are-got behavior pattern is easily adopted and strengthened.

Conflict will not cease until the heart is radically transformed. Jesus, who "knew what was in man" (John 2:25),

placed “Blessed are the peacemakers” *after* “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matt. 5:9, 8). Outward peace stems from inward purity. Until hearts are captive to Christ, there is no peace, only occasional uneasy truces, during which hostile forces are redeployed and future battles are plotted.

The heart can be cleansed, not by the resolution of the believer, but through the blood of the Redeemer. The atonement of Jesus Christ was for our wrongbeing as well as our wrongdoing.

The pure in heart seek not to master but to serve. They are concerned to invest themselves, not to protect themselves. Their response to insult and injury is forgiveness, not vengeance. A stupid world judges them weak, but they possess a resilient strength that cannot be overcome. The pure in heart alone can be at peace and be peacemakers.

♦ ♦ 42 ♦ ♦

Holiness—Belonging Utterly to God

God is holy; and therefore, all that God takes unto himself becomes holy. To be holy, in the fundamental meaning of the term, is to belong utterly to God.

God’s people are called upon to sanctify themselves, to acknowledge themselves as holy by dedicating everything they are and have to God.

We are creatures of time. To be holy means that our time belongs to God. This does not mean that every conscious moment is to be spent doing something religious. But it does mean that how we spend our time is to be governed by the will of God, not by personal whims and wishes.

We are also creatures of space. Everybody has to be somewhere. But where we live, if we would be holy, must be determined by God's will. If I could have my way, I would never live away from the seacoast. Few aspects of nature produce the inspiring and helpful effects upon me that the ocean does. But I am presently called, in the will of God, to live and work where I seldom catch sight of a large puddle. He is the Lord of our space.

To be holy means that our jobs and money belong to God. How we make our money and how we spend it must be brought under the Lordship of the Holy One. You cannot be a mechanic if God wants you to be a doctor. And you cannot choose to be a preacher if God wants you to herd goats. He knows where He needs us.

An individual is extended through his family. To be holy means that our families must be "on the altar." We cannot be lord of other people's lives. Holiness means "amen" to God's will for our children, whatever our own dreams and hopes for them may have been.

God calls us to belong radically to himself, to devote our time, space, work, money, and family—and all else—to Him. And He responds to our dedication with His claiming, cleansing, controlling love. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

♦ ♦ 43 ♦ ♦

The Divided Self

From childhood most of us have been acquainted with Robert Louis Stevenson's story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Jekyll was an amiable physician with a good practice, a man

respected for his character and work. But under the influence of a potent drug he underwent a radical personality change. He became Mr. Hyde, a man guilty of bestial crimes.

There are people in the church with a similar problem. They seem to be sincerely and sweetly Christian much of the time. They speak graciously and act kindly. But under stress, when they are sufficiently provoked, they act and react selfishly, lashing out at others, speaking in anger and rancor, and doing things that are destructive.

Such persons are deeply remorseful when the storm passes. They bitterly regret what they have said or done. They are penitent and apologetic. Fresh resolutions to be Christlike are earnestly made. Or, frustrated by their inability to control themselves, they may become defensive and rationalize their conduct.

There is a remedy for this double-minded condition. Consistent Christlikeness of spirit is possible. The blood of Jesus can cleanse from all sin, and the Spirit of truth can reside and preside in the heart. Mr. Hyde can die and Dr. Jekyll live in peace.

The world labels sin as broad-mindedness and libels holiness as narrow-mindedness. Scripture does not speak in these categories, but it distinguishes between being "carnally minded" and "spiritually minded" (Rom. 8:6). The "carnal mind" can be abolished, and the follower of Jesus can be spiritually minded, with "life and peace" as the result (vv. 7, 6).

Preachers used to ask, and be asked, "Is the old man dead?" They weren't inquiring about our fathers but about our hearts. The "old man" of sin, of selfishness, must be put to death so that the "new man" of righteousness might live unhampered and undefiled.

Is Mr. Hyde dead?

❖ ❖ 44 ❖ ❖

Where Are Your Keys?

Several years ago I heard Pastor Roy Kanhai tell this story: It was his custom, before going to his study, to pause at the altar and commune with God. One morning he laid his keys there as he prayed. After leaving the study, he approached the altar to retrieve his keys. As he did so, the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Roy, that is just where the keys to all your life belong—on the altar." He did not leave until he had faced the question, "Are all the keys on the altar? Is your life, in all its relationships, fully committed to My will?" and could answer joyfully, "Yes, Lord, they are!"

We should all face the same question. Are we fully consecrated to God? Does He have all the keys on the ring? Our families, our homes, our churches, our jobs, our cars, our safe-deposit boxes, our checkbooks—are these on the altar? Confronting every aspect in our lives, every person and thing in our lives, can we say and mean, "Thy will, and not my will, be done"?

In *The Powers That Be*, a study of the growth in power of certain news media, David Halberstam shows how news was not simply reported, it was invented, managed, interpreted, and omitted. The determining factor was not truth but ratings and profit. Everyone and everything was evaluated by this criterion: How will it affect ratings and profits? Personal careers and national interests were sacrificed to Mammon.

For the serious Christian, there is one criterion by which things must be judged—the will of God. Anything that opposes and contradicts the will of God is evil, for God is holy; is foolish, for God is wise; is destructive, for God is life. No price is too great to pay for the alignment of

all life to the will of God. No prize is worth the deflection of life from God's will.

Where are your keys? Is your total life on the altar? Is Jesus the Lord in fact as well as name? Does He possess and control your whole life with your glad consent? Consecration is itself the key to joy and peace and power in Christian living.

♦ ♦ 45 ♦ ♦

Holiness as Submission

My morning devotions recently took me through the Book of Leviticus. Much of this "manual for priests" has minimal interest to me. Chapter 19 is fascinating, however, for it contains what some scholars refer to as "the Holiness Code."

Beginning with the overarching command, "Be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (v. 2), it continues with a variety of specific commands, spelling out what it meant for Israel to be holy. Some relate to personal conduct, some to social behavior. Some govern acts, some govern attitudes. The relevance of some is immediately obvious, the relevance of others less so.

Over and over this phrase recurs, "I am the Lord." In the 37 verses into which the chapter has been divided, "I am the Lord" appears 15 times. From this literary feature an inescapable truth emerges: Holiness is our submission to His Lordship. Obedience to God is essential to human holiness.

Of course, outward conduct is linked to inward attitude wherever holiness is real. A soldier can obey an order even though he despises the officer who issues that order. Like the recalcitrant child, one can sit down and keep quiet

while he is standing up and answering back on the inside. The submission to lordship that characterizes holiness, however, is the *heart's* yes to God's will.

Internalizing holiness calls for a deep cleansing from sin and for the transfer of God's law from tablets of stone or pages of Scripture to our hearts. Through the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit this transformation is possible here and now. The resulting experience is expressed by living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Holiness and discipleship are synonymous.

"I am the Lord" has for its corollary, "You are the servant." He commands; we obey. We obey, not because His will is comprehensible, convenient, profitable, or pleasant—but simply because He is Lord. When His will involves sacrifice, danger, or death, we are comforted by knowing His Lordship is not despotic. "His banner over [us] is love" (Song of Sol. 2:4, NASB). But we obey, not because we are comforted, but because He is Lord. Holiness is our obedience to His Lordship.

◆ ◆ 46 ◆ ◆

The Impossible

On the bulletin board next to the telephone, my wife, Doris, had written, "Pick up tomorrow." Reading it, I thought, I wish I could hang around and watch her do that.

My mind began to travel over yesterday's miles, and I thought of many signs I had passed exhorting me to do the impossible. En route to a revival some years ago I kept seeing large, red-lettered signs saying, "Impeach Earl Warren." I couldn't do that, whatever my opinion of his work as the Supreme Court chief justice. Another sign said, "Fly Now." Even with "the pedal to the metal," my car would not get

airborne. I had to be content with the legal speed limit for automobiles. I began to appreciate the simple signs commanding the possible and practical actions—like “Stop,” “Go,” “Yield,” and “Merge Right.”

One great thing about the Bible is the practical nature of its ethical injunctions. What it commands me to be and do I can be and do. Not in my own strength, of course, but by the grace of God that pardons, cleanses, renews, and empowers for service. Counsels of perfection are not the stuff of which Scripture’s injunctions are composed.

What God demands He enables, and what He enables He judges. That truth is at once a comfort and a challenge. Facing His demand for holy living, I cannot plead my weakness as an excuse to ignore the demand. He can fill me with the Holy Spirit, who is power for the faint, and in that power I can stand, speak, and serve, whatever the inner fears or outer foes that attempt to intimidate me.

If we focus on the corruption and division of the carnal heart, God’s command, “Be ye holy,” sounds impossible—even absurd. But “no word from God shall be without power” (Luke 1:37, Amp.). Heard in faith as personal address to our souls, the word God speaks as command is also promise, the promise of ability and authority to do what He requires. Holiness is possible, not because we are strong, but because His strength is made perfect in our weakness. He can make our hearts pure and our lives righteous.

I can’t pick up tomorrow, but I can be holy today.

♦ ♦ 47 ♦ ♦

Divine Holiness—Human Reverence

When Isaiah saw the Lord exalted in holiness, he was struck dumb. Finding his voice, he could not join the seraphim who

sang, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." He could only cry in anguished confession, "Woe is me! . . . I am a man of unclean lips" (6:3, 5).

When John beheld the radiant face of the glorified Christ, he "fell at his feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17). Only the gentle touch and reassuring voice of the Lord brought the apostle to his feet again.

The holiness of God, breaking suddenly upon the consciousness of a person, produces reverence, dread, awe. It calls into question his very existence; and only the redemptive activity of God, which Scripture identifies as an expression of His holiness, enables the human heart to hope for salvation and not destruction.

One of the saddest betrayals of Scripture can be found in the chummy attitude many professing Christians adopt toward God, and in the buddy-buddy language they use of Him. Anyone who can speak to or about God with casual flippancy has not seen the God of the Bible, the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that God is aloof, remote, unaring. But when He draws near, like Abraham of old we become aware of our frailty—"dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). Like Isaiah of old we become aware of moral defect—"unclean lips" (6:5). Like Thomas of old we hush our dogmatic doubts—"my Lord and my God!" (John 20:28, most versions). Like John of old we fall before Him in speechless wonder—"as dead" (Rev. 1:17). As A. W. Tozer cautioned, with God there can be intimacy but not familiarity.

God is not a peer with whom we can be chummy. He is not a member of our club, or even of our church, with whom we can be at ease in our sin. He is the Lord "high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1), whose glory fills the earth, whose holiness condemns our impurity even as it provides our cleansing.

Cockiness in the presence of God means only that we have not seen Him as He is and have not seen ourselves as we are. Divine holiness produces human reverence.

❖ ❖ 48 ❖ ❖

Heart Religion

In a revival service where I was preaching, a young pastor's wife came forward for prayer. She was in earnest, smarting under some spiritual defeats and hungry for victory. After she had prayed, she testified, and this sentence grabbed me: "It's so hard to live something you don't have in your heart."

Her words, confirmed by her experience, underscore a point I have repeatedly tried to make. Life is lived from the inside out. The quality of our actions will be determined by the condition of our hearts. Unless the heart is pure and strong, occupied and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will cave in under the pressure of "the world, the flesh, and the devil." "Keep your heart with all diligence," an ancient word of wisdom exhorts, "for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Posting the Ten Commandments on your wall will not empower you to keep them. The law written on stone or paper cannot energize our obedience to its demands. What we need is the law written inwardly, engraved upon the heart. Thank God, this interior religion is promised as part of "the new covenant," which God established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16).

The Holy Spirit was first poured out upon Christians on the Day of Pentecost. Among other things, this annual

Jewish feast commemorated the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. On the day when the writing of the law outwardly was celebrated, the Holy Spirit came to write the law inwardly.

The young pastor's wife had been through a familiar, dreary sequence: Try . . . fail . . . try harder . . . fail again . . . try even harder . . . fail more conspicuously . . . become discouraged. What she needed, sought, and received was the Holy Spirit's fullness, cleansing from sin and conforming her inner life to the will of the Lord.

Yes, it is hard to live what the heart lacks. But God is able to fit our hearts for holy living. He makes possible what John Wesley called "good old heart religion."

◆ ◆ 49 ◆ ◆

Easier but Not Easy

The story of our Lord's temptation begins with the words, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1, ASV). Being Spirit-filled will not exempt from temptation.

When I came into the church, I kept hearing preachers say, "Holiness is the Christian life made easy." I no longer believe that. If they say "easier," I agree. When the carnal mind is destroyed, there is no fifth columnist within to sneak the gate open for the enemy. But the enemy doesn't cancel the battle for that reason. Satan signs no armistice. He will be snapping at our heels when we are stepping through the door of death.

Conflict, struggle, and temptation are part of the Christian life. The Spirit does not lead us into hiding but into battle. He does not spare us from suffering; He refines us through suffering. Holiness puts you on a collision course

with the world's social, political, and religious structures, which are unholy.

The life of Jesus Christ and the lives of His people that we read about in Scripture were marked by ordeals. Life was not easy. God was not committed to their comfort, pleasure, or longevity, but to their character formation. In His own wisdom and goodness, God "spared not his own Son" (Rom. 8:32), and He will not spare you and me. Satan requested and received permission to afflict Job. When he applies for a permit to try us, God will not refuse to issue it.

The only fellow I ever heard testify, "The devil hasn't been bothering me," also confessed, "I haven't been bothering him either." He admitted that he was backslidden. Most of us, however, are like a woman who stood and testified in one of my former pastorates. She had been going through severe trials and began her testimony by saying, "Brother McCumber, there is a sure 'nuff devil." I've found it so.

Holiness makes the Christian life easier, but not easy. The struggles and battles do not cease this side of death and heaven. The Spirit-filled and Bible-armed can triumph, however, as did their Lord. Victory can be constant.

◆ ◆ 50 ◆ ◆

The Holy Can Be Hurt

To be holy does not make us less human; it makes us more truly human. Holiness is the will of God for humanity, and the ethical demands of both Old and New Testaments can be distilled into the command/promise: "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, NKJV; 1 Pet. 1:16, RSV). The holier one is, the more genuinely human one is.

And this means that the sanctified heart is easily hurt. It is sensitive to sin, sin that wounds it and sin that wounds

others. The notion that if I am holy, then nothing others say or do can hurt me, is nonsense. We are bruised and broken by words and deeds that are untrue, unfair, or unkind.

Where holiness makes a difference is not in the capacity to be injured but in the reaction to injury. The unholy heart will hate the offender and seek revenge for the offense. It will nurse bitterness and resentment until the inner life is poisoned, and the poison will spread into social relationships.

By contrast, the heart possessed by the Holy Spirit—cleansed from sin and filled with love—will pray for the offender, bear its hurt without bitterness, and exercise a ready willingness to forgive. The holy heart will seek, not vengeance, but reconciliation.

Jesus died in the grossest miscarriage of justice in all history. His death was lonely, agonizing, and shameful. Its horror was intensified by the heartless gibes of hateful spectators. Yet Jesus looked upon His crucifiers with holy love and prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Stephen became the first martyr to die for Christ. Religious men with hate-filled hearts stoned him to death. He responded to ultimate injury in the spirit of Jesus, praying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

The holy heart is human and can be hurt. But it answers injury with love and prayer and forgiveness.

♦ ♦ 51 ♦ ♦

***Dreariness Is Not
a Synonym for Goodness***

Abiel Holmes was a New England minister in the 18th century. For some reason, perhaps the heritage of his Puritan

forebears, he was solemn, almost somber. His wife, Sally, in sharp contrast, was given to “laughter and some quick chatter.” She said to him one night, en route home from prayer meeting, “Abiel, why are you afraid to be happy? Surely the Lord loves a cheerful heart! People don’t have to be dreary to be good.”

Sally was right. Dreariness and goodness are not synonymous. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matt. 5:8). Some modern translations translate “blessed” as “happy.” Holiness is wedded to happiness and should not be given a divorce.

*God has a sense of humor,
And you can bank on that.
He made Seuss, the maker of
That weird Cat in the Hat.*

*God has a sense of humor,
He likes a hearty laugh—
How else can we account for
The aardvark and giraffe?*

*God has a sense of humor,
It's tinged with irony;
Stuffy bishops otherwise
Remain a mystery.*

*God has a sense of humor,
A thought that comforts me
Each morning as I'm shaving
The mirrored face I see.*

I wrote that a few years ago, and I believe it still. Scripture says, “A merry heart does good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22). In the parable of the prodigal son, the father throws a party for the returned son, and says, “We should make merry, and be glad” (Luke 15:32). James wrote, “Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (5:13)—as if a happy heart and singing lips were perfectly natural for Christians. We need not fear happiness. We are to avoid “the pleasures

of sin” (Heb. 11:25) but to enjoy the “pleasures for evermore” (Ps. 16:11) that come from God’s presence in people’s lives.

◆ ◆ 52 ◆ ◆

Humor—a Saving Salt

Justus Fox operated a type of foundry in colonial New England. He was one of the most versatile workmen in that day and place. Historian Isaiah Thomas describes him as “a farrier, an apothecary, a bleeder and cupper, a dentist, an engraver, a culter, a tanner, a lamp-black maker, a physician, a maker of printing ink, and a type of founder,” and adds, “At most of these pursuits he was proficient.”

More important than his various skills was his character. He lived up to his name—Justus. A German Baptist, he was “humorous, also very pious, exemplary, humane, and charitable.” That’s too much to carve on a tombstone, but wouldn’t it make a great tribute to any Christian!

I am impressed with the inclusion of “humorous” in the catalog of his Christian virtues. Too many regard humor as suspect in those who profess to follow Christ. Holiness is sometimes equated with grimness. This is a mistake. One who is pious can also be humorous.

Elton Trueblood, one of the most perceptive of Christian thinkers and writers, authored a book on *The Humor of Christ*. Whoever thinks Christ was lacking in humor has misread the Gospels. He was no clown, but He evidenced a sharp sense of humor.

To read the *Journal* of John Wesley is to encounter a man of subtle humor. This surprises some readers who have equated Wesley’s intensity with unrelieved gravity.

Wesley's humor is not broad, is not slapstick, but classical British irony and understatement. When I read him, I am intrigued with the frequent sallies of wit to be found in the account of his life and work.

The most difficult people I've ever worked with are those devoid of humor. They are victims of ulcers and purveyors of dyspepsia. They tighten every situation to its breaking point. By contrast, those who laugh at themselves and with others usually work relaxed and help others to do so.

"A merry heart does good, like medicine" (Prov. 17:22, NKJV). One can overdose on humor, but severity of spirit is a greater danger. Chaste humor is a life preserver.

♦ ♦ 53 ♦ ♦

Holy Is as Holy Does

To paraphrase an old saying, holy is as holy does. Genuine holiness is always a matter of conduct. It is more than behavior, but it is never less.

Scripture exhorts, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15). When the King James translation was made, "conversation" meant more than talking with folks. It meant one's entire outward life. Of course, our speech habits are included, and when we are chatting with neighbors over the backyard fence, that is a good time to remember this summons to holy living.

No matter what we claim for our hearts or say with our mouths, unless our daily behavior is holy we will not convince others of the truth of our doctrines and professions. The only believable holiness is a lived-out holiness, not a holiness hidden in hearts or written in books.

While the victim of a robbery was lying in the road, beaten half to death by bandits, a priest and a Levite "looked

on him, and passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:32, see 31). According to their profession they were holy men. The Old Testament names their offices as sacred. Their indifference to human need, however, exposed them as loveless hypocrites. True holiness demands involvement with the poor, hungry, sick, injured, and homeless of earth.

We can also turn the saying around: Holy does as holy is. Unless the inner life is pure, unless the heart is filled with love, outward behavior will not be holy. From the "heart . . . are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). The unclean, unloving heart may do respectable and religious things, but not holy things. Intentions cannot be separated from actions. The stream cannot be clear if the spring is polluted.

Scripture contains both the demand for holy behavior and the promise of a clean heart. Without the promise the demand only mocks our weakness. Without the demand the promise becomes a refuge for the insincere.

Our hearts and our hands can be clean. The inner and outer life can be holy. This is true, not because sin is feeble and easily removed, but because grace is mighty and transforms a believer utterly.

♦ ♦ 54 ♦ ♦

Willing and Doing

The Civil War was raging in America. A Union army under W. T. Sherman was marching through Georgia, spreading havoc in all directions. As Sherman's "bummers" were passing through the town of Covington, some of them broke ranks to pillage the homes that flanked their route. Suddenly a young black woman spotted her "Sunday" hat on the head of a passing soldier. Rushing toward him in anger,

she exclaimed, "If I had the power like I've got the will, I'd tear you to pieces."

Willing but unable—that is a common problem. Paul wrote, "To will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Rom. 7:18, NKJV). It was the expression of a frustrated man, awakened to his guilt, consenting mentally to the claims of divine law, but lacking power to overcome the sin that functioned as a down-dragging power in his heart.

Another writer expressed the ancient problem in this couplet:

I see the good, and I approve it, too;

Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.

From the wretched heart that cannot couple power with will, the cry is wrung, "Who will deliver me . . . ?" And Paul supplies the answer, "God—through Jesus Christ . . . !" (Rom. 7:24, 25, NKJV). Through the cleansing blood of Christ, applied in the power of the Holy Spirit, sin in the heart must yield to righteousness in the life. God can pardon and sanctify and empower our weak selves, making it possible for us to live victoriously.

Paul exhorted his Philippian friends, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (2:12-13, NKJV). To will and to do! Our "yes" to the truth of God can be given in our lives as well as in our minds. We do not have to be looted by a mocking enemy of that which is rightfully ours as children of God. Holiness as cleansing and as conduct is a possibility of grace.

"Political power," said Mao Tse-tung, "grows out of the barrel of a gun." Moral power grows out of the blood of Christ.

◆ ◆ 55 ◆ ◆

The Wind

Willard Straight, who was a founder of *The New Republic*, died at the close of World War I. Writing to his widow, Walter Lippmann paid tribute to his courage and influence, saying, "He had become the wind and not the blown."

The wind and not the blown. He led. He acted. He determined directions. What a choice epitaph!

The Holy Spirit is "the wind and not the blown." In the mother tongues of Scripture the words for wind are also the words for the Spirit of God. He is sovereign. He cannot be controlled or manipulated. He refuses to be shaped by our theologies of the Spirit. He cannot be locked into our methods of operation. We do not dictate to the Spirit. He is as free as the wind, as elusive, as mysterious, as powerful—and more so. His will is law and might and victory.

The Spirit-filled church becomes "the wind and not the blown." The church, "when he is come" (John 16:8), is no longer weak, no longer worldly. It does not ape its culture, fearful of being different. It does not allow government, industry, or religion to write its agenda or prescribe its methods. It leaps over the boundaries set by provincialisms and nationalisms in its membership. It ignores the barriers of race, caste, and merit in its love and service. What it is and what it does is determined, not by the society that environs it, but by the Spirit who creates, indwells, and guides it.

Such a church may suffer in this world, as did its Lord. But prison, torture, death, and all lesser afflictions can never quench its devotion to the Lord, can never muzzle its witness to His name.

The individual believer, filled with the Spirit, becomes "the wind and not the blown." A worldly church cannot

imprison his conscience or daunt his spirit. He will not become the tame and tongueless sycophant of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy. He will not rubber-stamp a spineless “me too” upon the decisions and actions of men who exalt tradition above Scripture. Titles, offices, and honors cannot bribe him from the path of moral rectitude. His primary concern is to hear Christ say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:23).

◆ ◆ 56 ◆ ◆

Chewing Tobacco

A new fad, especially among the young, is chewing tobacco or dipping snuff. Even on the campuses of our colleges some are spitting brown, perhaps thinking to prove their independence thereby.

The habit is stupid, dirty, and unhealthy. It looks bad, smells bad, and is bad.

I knew a tobacco chewer who attended a rural church. The little frame building had colonial windows, with 16 panes of glass in each. The rear window on the left side had a missing pane. This man sat by that window and occasionally spat a stream of tobacco juice through the empty space.

The window was repaired, unbeknown to him. The next Sunday morning, at what he thought was a discreet moment during the sermon, he turned his head and let the juice fly. The ugly brown stream hit the pane of glass—kersplatt! It spread out and ran down, attracting everyone’s attention. It was a horrifying moment, for he was a shy person.

The habit, once acquired, is hard to break. When I was a boy, one of my friends chewed tobacco. I convinced him

that it was obnoxious and unhealthy. Agreeing with my arguments, he spit out his cud, then threw the unused plug into a vacant lot covered with palmettos. The next day I saw him hunting earnestly among the palmettos for that discarded plug.

I chewed tobacco once, when I was about six or seven years old. An uncle gave me a "chaw," warning me not to let my mother know. I followed him about as he worked in the yard, spitting when he spit, and feeling grown-up.

Suddenly my mother approached. In my haste to avoid detection I swallowed the cud. Was I sick! I turned green and heaved up things I couldn't recall ever having swallowed. That was my last chew of tobacco.

If chewing or dipping never resulted in embarrassment or inconvenience, it is still a foolish habit—and dangerous. A pinch between your cheek and gum can result in cancer of the mouth.

Purity of heart and maturity of thought will cure the habit. Holiness people spit white.

♦ ♦ 57 ♦ ♦

Pollution Control

I was dining with friends in San Diego at a Naval Officer's Club that overlooks the harbor. Jim Huffman told me about stringent pollution-control legislation that had been enacted to protect the harbor's water and air. A ship cannot pump out its bilges or blow the soot from its stacks in the harbor.

Wouldn't it help if we could enforce such laws in the church? The gossip could be told, "You cannot dump your bilge in the congregation. You must move beyond earshot

before you voice your damaging rumors.” Those prone to anger could be told, “Head for open sea before you blow your stack.” Without an audience they would damage only themselves, and perhaps they would opt for wiser, safer behavior patterns.

Who can measure the pollution spread by the whisperers of talebearers and the explosions of hotheads? Their words have fallen like bilge to poison, like soot to begrime, the atmosphere of the church. Their words eat like acid rain, corrosive and destructive to the green life on which they fall. What a relief would be provided if these sharp tongues and volcanic spirits could be effectually isolated!

Unfortunately, we cannot force them to open sea. The harbor continues to be spoiled with the sludge of hot, hasty, smutty, slashing words.

A better solution than isolation is sanctification. Such hearts can be purified and such tongues controlled by the abiding, cleansing Spirit of God. No man can tame the tongue, but God can. A man can bridle a whirlwind easier than he can rein his tongue. But God can cleanse the heart, and the speech will become gracious, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34, NKJV).

Wesley tells of early Methodists rounded up and trundled off to face a magistrate. When the judge asked for the charges, one of the mob complained, “They converted my wife.” Before that, he said, she had an awful tongue, but now she is as meek as a lamb. The judge ordered the prisoners released, saying, “Let them convert every scold in town.”

God can cleanse thought and refine speech. Let Him do it, or head for the open sea!

♦ ♦ 58 ♦ ♦

Incentive

A powerful incentive to holiness is “the blessed hope” of our Lord’s return (Titus 2:13, ASV). Every person who possesses this hope, says John, “purifies himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

Peter affirmed the coming “day of the Lord,” when a new heaven and earth will be formed. He urged Christians to live “lives of holiness and godliness” as they await the fulfillment of the promise of Christ’s return (see 2 Pet. 3:10-13, RSV).

The second coming of Christ is not only an incentive to holy living but also a spur to faithful service. In a number of parables, Jesus exhorted the disciples to earnestly pursue their mission and be ready to account for their stewardship at His sudden arrival (e.g., Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27).

Indeed, holiness and service cannot be disjoined. One is not holy who does not serve. One who is not holy serves his own interests, not the Lord’s. Precisely because they were sent into the world on a mission for the Kingdom, Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples (John 17:16-19).

I do not know when the Lord will come, but I cannot doubt that coming. We have His word on it, and that reduces the scorn and skepticism of unbelieving men to blathering nonsense. Jesus Christ is coming again, and I want to be ready for His appearing. To be ready, I must diligently pursue the work He has assigned, earnestly loving those I serve from a heart purified by His grace.

His promised coming summons me to tolerate no sin, waste no time, and despise no person. It forbids me to love a collapsing evil world. I am to do all within my power

to rescue those who are trapped in sin. The kinds of things Jesus did when He was on earth form the agenda for all of us who desire to hail His return in peace and with joy. Our responsibility is not to calculate the date of His coming but to pour out holy lives in service to needy people.

“Be holy,” for Christ is coming again.

♦ ♦ 59 ♦ ♦

Resistance to Holiness

There is a second work of grace. There is a crisis experience of entire sanctification by which the heart is cleansed from inbred sin and empowered for holy living and faithful service.

In a moment of time, a moment of faith, God's promise of cleansing and wholeness can become our experience of that purity, peace, and power. Self-centered life becomes Christ-centered and other-oriented.

To proclaim this possibility of grace was the reason our Church of the Nazarene came into existence. The doctrine and experience of “second-blessing holiness” is our reason for being. If we cease to preach, teach, and experience this, we have failed our Lord, our forebears, and our generation.

Against the clear and earnest proclamation of this truth a rising measure of resistance has developed. This prejudice has been rationalized by citing the aberrations of some who preached it and the hypocrisies of some who professed it. Such arguments, however, could be used to justify discreet silence on every cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith.

A Nazarene preacher who is silent on the subject needs to ask himself if he maintains that silence because he lacks the experience. A Nazarene layman who is opposed to the preaching of holiness needs to ask himself if his objection

rises from an unwillingness to reject the world's values and subject his whole life to the Lordship of Christ. Without such radical submission we cannot exercise the faith that brings heart holiness.

Holiness preaching is vastly more than the mouthing of inherited clichés. It is essentially the exposition of Holy Scriptures. Holy living is vastly more than legalistic adherence to a list of rules. It is the expression of Christlike love in every relationship of life.

Such preaching and living is the antithesis of selfishness and worldliness, of materialism and hedonism. From the depraved heart, bent toward these unchristian ways, stems most of the opposition to the doctrinal and ethical truths of holiness. The carnal mind fights for its life. We must see that the fight is lost.

♦ ♦ 60 ♦ ♦

The Third Generation

In his book *Exploring Christian Holiness, Volume 3*, Richard Taylor relates an interesting conversation. A butler is asked, "How long have you been in the family?"

His reply, "For three degenerations, sir."

Taylor discusses "the phenomenon of the eroded ideal" as an expression of the law of entropy in society's religious life. He quotes a young man who confessed, "Religion for my grandfather was a way of life; for my father it was a tradition; for me it is a nuisance." Part of what we mean by "original sin," Taylor reminds us, is "the inherent tendency to decay" (p. 88).

This tendency has been frequently noted in the material realm. The first generation makes a fortune; the second conserves it; the third squanders it. In the spiritual realm this sad tendency also operates.

Who has not observed it, and grieved over it, within the holiness movement? For grandfather, holiness was a way of life, a devotion to God that burned intensely within a heart cleansed from sin and filled with the Spirit. It provided light and warmth that determined attitudes, behavior, and relationships.

For father, holiness became a tradition—a doctrinal formula, an ethical code, a worship pattern, unsupported by a radical personal experience of cleansing from sin and communion with God. The inner lack led to numerous compromises and contradictions that deadened the soul.

For the son, holiness becomes a nuisance, often resulting in overt rebellion against the intellectual and moral strictures imposed upon a life more oriented toward father's compromises than grandfather's convictions. When spiritual reality is missing, creed and code are viewed as galling restrictions rather than vital expressions of a heart possessed by Christ.

The answer is not a harsh trumpeting of creed and a stern imposition of code. The answer is renewal that pierces beyond tradition to experience, where God stands again before the person, convicting of sin and bringing pardon, cleansing, and liberation to the believing heart. Only then will son and father know what grandfather lived and enjoyed.

◆ ◆ 61 ◆ ◆

Living Grace

When Amanda Smith was a young Christian, she hungered to be sanctified wholly. She said, "The more I read my Bible, the deeper my hunger became."

She went to a preacher one day and asked him to explain Matt. 5:8—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they

shall see God." He told her that was a goal to approach; but he said, "God knows you can never be pure in heart."

Later she read, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3), and back she went to the same preacher. He said, "God does not sanctify you until just before you are ready to die . . . you could not live in this sinful world if you were holy. So if you were sanctified, you would die."

Crestfallen, she replied, "Well, if it is going to kill me, I don't want it."

Several years later, while listening to a message on holiness preached by John Inskip, the Lord instantly and powerfully cleansed her heart. She went on to become an effective holiness advocate with a worldwide ministry.

Entire sanctification is grace for living, not for dying. Heart purity is God's purpose, provision, and promise for this world, not for the next. Holiness is more than a target to aim at; it is a victory to experience here and now. That experience occurs where God's promise and man's faith intersect. Like the beatitudes that flank it, the sixth beatitude has reference to holy living in this unholy world.

We do not minimize sin. Sin in the heart is a deep-rooted, long-standing, and all-pervasive corruption. But grace "much more" abounds (Rom. 5:20). Through the atoning blood of Christ and the cleansing power of the Spirit, the holy Father can create holy children.

You will have to walk all your life to pace off the distance between a pure heart and a mature mind. Blunders and infirmities will attend those miles. However, growth in grace is greatly assisted by the inner cleansing. Every convert to Christ should be urged to seek that cleansing at the earliest possible moment. Holiness won't kill you; it will help you live.

◆ ◆ 62 ◆ ◆

Then and Now

Peter uses the phrase “holy men of God” to describe those who produced the divinely inspired literature we know as the Bible.

If there were “holy men of God,” then there can be holy men—and women—now. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds (Rom. 5:20), and God is able to cleanse and sustain His people in a world filled with corruption.

When John Wesley was challenged and opposed by skeptics who denied the possibility of holiness, he offered to produce many living witnesses. I thank God that when I proclaim the message of heart purity and love-mastered life, there are living witnesses who support that message with their character and conduct.

Some of them are preachers. My friend of many years, F. M. Digby, Jr., is an example. There is not a truer man on the face of the earth than Fletcher Digby. In good times and bad, in joy and in sorrow, in large churches and small, he has evidenced a loyalty to Christ and a power of love that exemplifies scriptural holiness. If I were dying and wanted help to find God, there is no one I would rather have at my bedside than him.

Some living witnesses who have inspired me are laypersons. Dora Jones comes at once to mind. I was her pastor for eight years. I’ve seen her occasionally during the years that have passed since I left Atlanta. She is always the same—unselfish, incorrupt, and enthused about the work of the Lord. Her daily life is a commentary on the passages of Scripture that assure us of God’s power to cleanse from all sin and fill with pure love.

A long list of names could be supplied. Everywhere I have preached and taught, there were men and women quietly

and unself-consciously demonstrating the truth of holiness. Their attitudes and actions make the message credible and challenge the messenger to believe and exemplify his own proclamation. There are holy men and women now, just as there were in "days of yore."

♦ ♦ 63 ♦ ♦

A Holy Man

He came to our town to open work for the Salvation Army. Our town at that time was Thomasville, Ga., and he was Sgt. Maj. George Bowman, a lay officer under the blood-and-fire banner.

He was a tall man but slightly stooped by arthritis. Blue eyes sparkled with candor from a face marked by prominent cheekbones and a ready grin. I saw him for the first time when he came to a Sunday morning service at my church and rose to testify.

Testifying was a frequent exercise for him. I heard him tell a civic club how God had salvaged him from deep sin. Five doctors had pronounced him an incurable alcoholic, and he was rapidly confirming their pessimistic diagnosis. But the Army found him on skid row, sobered him up, cleaned him up, filled him up, and introduced him to Jesus Christ. "Soup, soap, and salvation" wrought a transformation.

He stood before a ministerial association and told how the Lord had sanctified him wholly as "a second crisis experience of grace." Tuesday holiness meetings had awakened him to the possibility of a clean heart filled with pure love. At the penitent form he sought and found inward holiness.

What he professed he demonstrated. He was one of the most Christlike men I've ever known. In all kinds of weather

he limped through the streets of our town, taking food, fuel, medicine, and the gospel to the poor. Soon all the churches were working with him in social service.

He made a kettle-watching bell ringer out of me, and a *War Cry* boomer at times also. Helping George Bowman was a labor of love, and his gratitude was touching.

His great heart failed, and he was promoted to glory from our town. At his funeral, preached by John Needham, who later became national commander, the county commissioners, the city council, the merchants, lawyers, and doctors were present—and the preachers—with as many of his beloved poor as the large church would hold. We gathered to farewell a holy man who spoke and lived Christ's message of deliverance from sin and service to human needs.

♦ ♦ 64 ♦ ♦

Love Triumphant

Armando Valladares was a political prisoner in Cuba, where he suffered torture that crippled his body but could not break his spirit. In prison he “embraced Christ in desperation” as he heard men shout before the firing squads cut them down, “Long live Christ the King!”

Among those who strengthened his faith during the terrible years of imprisonment was a Protestant preacher named Gerardo and called by the prisoners “the Brother of the Faith.” Each evening Gerardo would call on the inmates to pray and sing hymns. Angry guards would beat him cruelly, but as soon as the guards left, the worship would resume.

The Brother of the Faith cheered his fellow sufferers, especially in the face of death. “Above all,” says Valladares, “he taught us not to hate.”

Under such conditions how easy it would be to hate! Yet this intrepid preacher, when he was being beaten, would lift his arms to heaven, “seeming to draw down pardon for his torturers.” He would pray for God to forgive them even as he was being savaged.

He was finally murdered, ripped apart by machine gun bullets, “still forgiving of his tormentors.”

Amor vincit omnia, the old Latins said—“Love conquers all.” What they meant by love I cannot say, but the love of Christ, ruling the hearts of His people, can enable them to endure the worst circumstances with the best of attitudes. He gives them power to love when it would be easy to hate, power to forgive when it would be natural to seek revenge.

As long as men such as Gerardo and Valladares shine like stars in the spiritual darkness that engulfs our world, others will be inspired to overcome evil with good, reflecting the spirit of Him who prayed from the Cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). There have always been such men; there always will be. No power of evil can subdue them, not even the satanic forces of a godless communism.

Valladares said of Gerardo, “He was his own most moving sermon.” Love preaches Christ through the suffering that is endured in a forgiving spirit!

♦ ♦ 65 ♦ ♦

Purity and Maturity

Purity is an emphatic concept with us. We have been accused of ignoring the profound depths of sin’s rootage in

human nature because we stress the power of God to fully cleanse the inner lives of His children. But we are not aligned with those who major on the "pessimism of nature." We prefer to strike the dominant chord of the "optimism of grace." The real thrust of the New Testament is a grace fixation, not a sin fixation. Grace superabounds where sin has abounded!

Without relinquishing or diminishing our accent on purity, we need to make emphatic the concept of maturity. Clean babies and pure children are still babies and children. They need to grow up, to mature spiritually, emotionally, and doctrinally. Much damage can be done within the life and work of the church, not just by mean people, but by little people; not just by the malicious, but by the childish.

To take offense readily, to rush for sympathy to others when we have been cut or stung by another's remarks, to be unwilling to suffer and endure in discreet silence for the sake of unity, to withhold cooperation unless we can have our own way about things, to refuse service when recognition and appreciation seem inadequate—these are the marks of immaturity, of childish and overwhelming concern for ourselves.

Perhaps more churches have been hindered by pettiness than by the open and vigorous assault of the world and the devil. Feuds have been perpetuated for years in some churches because immature Christians nursed their wounds, plotted their revenge, and urged others to "take up sides."

Some of this pettiness has been wrought by unregenerate sinners pretending to be Christians. But much of it owes to born-again believers who need to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1), to the cleansing of their hearts and the maturing of their lives.

The means of growth, like the means of grace, are available. But they can be neglected, with damaging conse-

quences. Diligently pursue the knowledge of Christ through the study of Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit to translate lessons into life. You will then achieve much good and avoid much hurt.

♦ ♦ 66 ♦ ♦

Press On

One of the “Brother Juniper” cartoons shows the little monk staring at a caged bird. The bird is scrawny and rumped. It looks like it was pulled through a knothole backwards. The identification label reads, “Bird of Paradise.” Juniper comments, “I don’t think he quite made it.”

Scripture makes it clear that none of us birds, bound for paradise, have yet arrived. We are in the process, with a long stretch to go before we are fully Christlike. Paul writes of this goal in Phil. 3:7-11 and adds, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (v. 12, NIV). Toward that goal, however, he single-mindedly presses forward, and calls upon us to “live up to what we have already attained” (vv. 13-16, NIV).

The purest hearts and holiest lives in the Church still fall short of the perfection they shall experience beyond the resurrection. None of God’s people are “faultless” until they reach “the presence of his glory” (Jude 24). As Thomas Cook says, in *New Testament Holiness*, “Through lack of knowledge, defective memory, a fallible judgment, slowness of understanding, and numerous other infirmities, we are as liable to err as it is natural for us to breathe.”

More important, then, than the point we have reached, and than the pace at which we travel, is the direction in

which we are moving. To quote Mr. Cook again, "If we would grow in grace, we must be always aiming at something above and beyond us. . . . Our motto must always be forward, onward, upward."

We must be patient, therefore, with the faults and failures of ourselves and others. We are not what we shall be, but we are not what we once were. God will not abandon His purpose for us: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6, NIV).

Don't turn back, don't go in circles, just keep headed homeward. Our Captain gives no orders to retreat. "One thing I do," cried Paul, "I press on toward the goal" (3:13-14, NIV). Press on!

Author W. E. McCumber shares practical insights on the meaning of holiness as taught in the Scriptures. These brief essays, that first appeared as articles in the *Herald of Holiness* magazine, possess a single unifying theme—holy life flowing from a holy heart.

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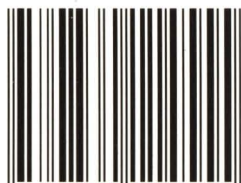
Love triumphs!

W. E. McCumber is a household name in the holiness movement. An effective pastor, evangelist, and professor for a number of years, he also served 13 years as editor of the *Herald of Holiness* magazine.

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