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SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS and THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

By John Paul

Seven Chapters and a Sermon on the Higher Life

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Chapter 1 HOLINESS DEFINED

It will be borne in mind that the grace which becomes the theme of these chapters has several different names, which imply the same thing. Some of these are the coinage of the King James version of the Bible, others originate in theological literature. They are all legitimate; and if a man entertains a spirit of antipathy for any one of these great designating terms, it denotes a certain shade of mental disorder due to prejudice. We are persuaded that while we should avoid an imposing style we should not hesitate to use freely any and all of these established terms, as we may have occasion. There may be some so narrow-minded and intolerant as to suffer this to drive them from us; but there is a much smaller per cent of this class than you might suppose from the noise you hear, and they are more likely to see their own folly while fleeing from your plainness of speech than they are when you curry favor with their fastidiousness.

Some will tell us that much of the terminology we use is man-made, and therefore not legitimate. But we would ask if under the providence of God, every word in the English language

is not man-made. It is not divine origin, but centuries of association and usage that has rendered sacred the expression of the King James Bible. We all love the venerable text of this old translation, and many of our best people have agreed that the more modern translations have not only failed to improve on it, but have fallen below its majestic eloquence. However, we cannot afford to be so biased as to insist that no vehicle of expression has a right to be recognized unless it is found in this vocabulary of three hundred years ago.

Again, it is objected that some terms used in teaching holiness are not expressive, and are even misleading. We will grant that there is almost no term in our language sufficient to express all there is in the experience of holiness; to indicate some characteristic feature of it is about all that can be expected of any name we may give it. For this reason, and because some terms seem more significant than others, certain terms may be preferred at certain times. If a term is current it need not be misleading. An intelligent teacher will not allow his terminology to mislead his hearers.

Again, it is objected that because certain expressions have been adapted and misused by fanatics, we should not use them. But it would be destructive for us to follow this rule, for the whole of our language is accessible to fanatics, and there is no law to keep them from using and misusing the most sacred and useful terms.

We feel at liberty to use interchangeably, as meaning virtually the same thing, the following expressions: sanctification, holiness, perfect love, perfection, circumcision of the heart, baptism with the Holy Ghost, the fullness of the blessing, heart purity, the being cleansed from all sin, full salvation, the second blessing, the higher life. There are other terms that can be employed with propriety. God has many names, and his many names throw light upon his nature, introducing him in various offices, and representing the manifold perfection of his nature. May we not, therefore, expect many terms to be brought forward for service in introducing this great divinely wrought experience which fulfills the purpose of God in his disciples, a work for which all Scripture was given, and for which "he gave" apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, -- the perfecting of the saints?

Let us treat these names or labels as windows through which we shall view the various phases of an experience that is better felt than told. The definition of each term will throw light on what the experience contains for the individual:

Sanctification. -- The act of God's grace, by which a man, having consecrated himself, is made holy. This gives us a view of the experience as a work of God, but requiring human cooperation. A strong term. Holiness. -- Complete moral and spiritual purity, wholeness, perfect soul health. This is a comprehensive term, implying God-likeness of character.

Perfect Love. -- The Spirit of Jesus filling the heart to the exclusion of all inward sin. This term represents the sweet side of the sanctified life. It implies freedom from selfishness. It is a very heavenly title.

Perfection. -- The presence of all the graces, unimpaired by depravity, implying freedom and preservation from all sin.

Circumcision of the Heart. -- The removal from the soul of God's child a something that came into the world with him, and from which he ought to be free, since freedom from it insures supreme love for God. Deut. 30:6.

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost. -- The promised Paraclete, whom the world cannot receive. A washing with the Spirit of heaven. It implies purity, power, and comfort.

The Fullness of the Blessing. -- The full benefit of the atonement of Jesus, which saves completely from sin, and furnishes an abundance of living and dying grace. Heart Purity. -- A term that implies that, though the Prince of this world cometh, he findeth nothing in us. Total deliverance from inward sin. An expression of the negative state of Christian perfection. Full Salvation -- an experience of salvation from all sin, held intact by a fullness of the abounding grace of God. The Second Blessing. -- The more abundant life that is instantly realized when the soul receives the purifying baptism with the Holy Ghost. The word blessing as here appropriated by theology does not have merely its ordinary meaning as we use it in speaking of refreshing showers, temporal benefits, or ordinary spiritual refreshing. The sophist would say that he has had the fourth, fifth, and thousandth blessing; but this is merely a play upon words, in order to avoid an issue. Those who seem to be opposed to the second blessing, are usually more opposed to the standard it represents than they are to the innocent term. It would be embarrassing to say, "I am opposed to being cleansed from all evil tempers and from every trait of the carnal mind, I am opposed to being freed from the tobacco habit;" but most any smooth tongue can say, "I don't believe in the second blessing." The Higher Life. -- A term equivalent to Paul's expression, "A more excellent way." It is understood to mean, that improvement on the inner life, brought about by the baptism with the Spirit. It does not re-fashion the outer life of God's child, but simply adds transparency to a life that is already good. In order to elucidate this subject, and get a clear understanding of the Scripture estimate of an experience of holiness, we will give attention to these words of Saint Paul: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, (thus) perfecting holiness in the fear of God." What is perfection? Holiness. What is holiness? Outward purity (being cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh) and inward purity (being cleansed from all filthiness of the spirit). Are you purified from the dross of evil temper, impatience, pride, and such things? Do you no longer touch the unclean thing, are all your habits, indulgences, and associations clean, are all defiling imaginations dismissed from your heart? Then you are a holy man. Now, we cannot accommodate the standard, and call a thing holiness, unless it fills the bill. Paul implies that a man can be a Christian without having this fullness that he designates in our quotation, but he clearly teaches in the same verse, that holiness is attainable and practicable.

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Chapter 2

HOLINESS COMMANDED

We need not waste time affirming that a human being may be sanctified, for God has said, "Be ye holy." If God requires it, we shall not have occasion to ask, "Is it attainable?"

Holiness is the law of God. The moral law as given in detail is simply a deduction from this one great command. When we come to the external, there may be imperfections in our

obedience, but our actuating principle must be perfect; there may be a trembling of the hands, a faltering of the feet, and a stammering of the tongue; but the heart must have an unhesitating loyalty to God.

God can pity our faults, and appreciate us in spite of them. He can tolerate us, and give us to feel his approval, before we attain to a state of holiness; but we must have been washed whiter than snow, and conformed to the image of his Son, before he can say, "Behold my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased." There is no doubt an interim, be it long or short, between the time when we first conceive of and aspire to God's standard, and the time when we reach it. During this interim a man may be right with God. When a man is reconciled to God, the controversy is settled; there are no grievous differences to be put down. But when we reach the point where God has nothing against us, we have only arrived at the first stage in the divine life. So soon as we learn to appreciate his will, and to discern his voice from the voice of strangers, he gives us the call to holiness (I Thess. 4:7), and calls our attention to that command which belongs to the aristocracy of the universe. Some would argue that a law of God enjoining holiness would not be reasonable, considering the conquered and depraved condition of humanity. But on the contrary, there is a deep philosophy in such a law. As "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith," so the command to be holy is our schoolmaster, instructing and chastening, that we might find the secret of the Lord and be sanctified by faith.

When a voice from the midst of the throne says, "Be ye holy," it will certainly drive a God-fearing man to his knees. He will look for promises on which to hang his hopes; he will look for provisions, that he may sue for help.

Very suggestive is this bit of Methodist history: "In 1729 two young men in England, reading the Bible saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do." It was some time before these young men found the way into the holiest; but they gave themselves no rest after they had seen the standard of the Almighty, till the secret was revealed, and the door of faith was opened.

The world estimates a man by what he does, and cares little for what he is. God takes our doings into account, but gives us to understand that to be is greater than to do. First, he gives us the ten commandments, conformity to which is necessary in order to good citizenship. Second, he gives us the two commandments, the greatest and the next greatest; these qualify us to keep the ten. Thirdly, he gives us the holy commandment (II Peter 2:21), or the command to be holy; this qualifies us to keep the two commandments, which enjoin perfect love.

The ten commandments, therefore, represent practical holiness, the one commandment, "Be ye holy," represents experimental holiness, while the two commandments, relating to love, enter into both departments, character and deportment, and blend right-being and right-doing into a symmetrical union.

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Chapter 3

HOLINESS PROMISED

A command is closely related to a promise, and a promise is closely related to a prophecy. A command may excite fear and uneasiness; but when coming from God, every command is in itself substantially a promise, for he is pledged to supply us with grace to do his biddings. The promise is calculated to kindle the fires of hope and produce a song in every despondent spirit.

At the command to be holy, the soul should become distressed over its depravity, and aroused to the fact that it is a serious thing to fall below God's standard; but the promise of holiness ought to awaken in us the notes of joy. Having a promise from God is next to having the thing itself; and if now is the day for the fulfillment of the promise, the thing promised is yours. True, you may not yet have occupied your inheritance, but it is no less your inheritance. You may not yet enjoy the blessing, but because of this fact the blessing is no less yours. A five-dollar bill is not five dollars, but we call it five dollars, because it is a due bill from the United States Government, representing five dollars that are actually in the treasury, and is to be cashed upon demand of the bearer.

Obadiah says that "Upon Mt. Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." The possessions are not only to be ours, but we are to take our claims and occupy them. The words are prophetic, relating prominently to this Pentecostal age, in which all of God's promises have reached their maturity. Spiritual Israelis today "the house of Jacob." The thought of the scripture is that the Christian may be entitled to more than he possesses, but that the fullness of the blessing shall be in reach of all.

There are promises in the Bible relating to many things, and directed to more than one class; but the promise of holiness cannot be claimed by the giddy, the worldly-minded, and the vicious. Holiness is an inheritance (Acts 26:18); therefore, no one is entitled to it but an heir. Now we are not heirs of God until 'the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'

A promise is to be estimated by the value of the thing promised, and according to the character of the one who makes the promise. There are great promises in the Bible; there are exceeding great promises; then there are those denominated as exceeding great and precious, because they are promises of holiness (II Peter 1:4). We who have escaped the corruption of the world are heirs of these promises, and by them are made partakers of the divine nature.

In order to guard a dormant church against a doctrine held in disrepute in some quarters, but at the same time a very fortunate and Scriptural doctrine, namely, that there is a definite attainment in holiness, reached by an act of faith, subsequent to our regeneration, some teachers will tell us that "the divine nature" in the text just quoted refers to the graces of Jesus, which of course we receive in the new birth. But the words mean more than that; as we have seen from the connection in which they occur, we must interpret them as meaning nothing short of the fullness of the blessing, a completed work of Christian holiness. No doubt, "Partakers of the divine nature" and "Partakers of his holiness" are parallel passages, implying a standard of Christian experience higher than that attained in conversion, and representing that standard as accessible only to those who have escaped the pollution of actual sin, and are in the household of the Heavenly Father.

Out of the many promises in God's word that relate to the perfection of believers, we will take time to notice two, and give a brief attention to their underlying thoughts. Deut. 30:6. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Here is a removal from the heart, of something contrary to love, and hence unholy; something that came into the world with us, and from which none but divine power can free us; deliverance from which parents cannot secure and hand down to their children; but each individual must appropriate the promise for himself. "The promise is unto you and (also of necessity) unto your children." Matthew 6:6. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." If the desire for the fullness of God is a happy experience, what must the fullness be? This hungering and thirsting is a strong desire, for which we cannot account, that comes unbidden to God and assimilates daily a portion of his Word. This is concrete righteousness. Not the act, but the principle; the substance of God-rightness. A condition not merely where God has nothing against us, but where we ourselves just suit him, and have "this testimony, that we please God." As sure as God is true, we shall reach this experience when conditions are met

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Chapter 4 HOLINESS PROVIDED FOR

No one would deny God's ability to make a man holy, no one would dispute that he is willing for all people to be holy. With these two premises, we have good ground to hope that upon investigation, we may discover that provisions are made for the sanctification of our souls.

It is true that according to the economy under which we live, man's optional powers interfere with the plan of God; but nothing else may interfere. The captive soul may be very helpless, but God can help. The dye of sin may be very deep, but Omnipotence can remove it; the tendencies of earth's atmosphere may be sinward, and hellward, but God can break the power of canceled sin, and change the issues of the heart; the moral miasma may rise in such density that a fog horn will be necessary to keep us off the breakers, but the Lord wills to preserve us from all evil; he wills to preserve our souls; he wills to preserve our going out, and our coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore.

Where shall we look for a provision to make men holy? No preparation of chemistry will remove the stain of sin; redemption is not latent in the human will, we might form the strongest of human resolutions, and exercise the vigilance of a guardian angel, yet the corruption of our hearts would be manifest, and we would be humiliated by an incessant failure to be holy. Early training and good raising are invaluable, but they have never in themselves produced a holy man. Education, good as it is, cannot produce saintliness, because it operates upon a different department in the man.

Since we can find no sanctifying agency in and of this world, we must look for one coming down from heaven. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, was made flesh, and dwelt among men.

His example and precepts incited men to holiness, and the blood he shed wields an influence at the throne of Omnipotence. It is proper to say that by his stripes we are healed. He died to save the world upon the sole condition that they would submit to his terms, and believe on his name. When he offered himself up, he had in mind to sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of purification, to which we are introduced by the word, "that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

From the many passages of Scripture establishing the fact that holiness is provided for in the atonement, we select this one beautiful and pathetic assertion in the epistle to the Hebrews: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

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Chapter 5 HOLINESS OBTAINED

It would be improper for me to say that a man had to feel like seeking holiness, feel sad and distressed because of his unholiness, and become possessed of a profound spirit of prayer before he is a proper candidate for the experience, because a man cannot command feeling. It is true this is a wholesome ordeal to pass through, and a man would scarcely reach the mount of God till he has felt more or less of the ordeal above described. But in mentioning the steps to holiness, we should not directly consider feelings, although a relative feeling is likely to attend all the conditions. As you very well know, there are two parties concerned in the sanctification of a man, God and the man. As soon as God and the man enter into a hearty cooperation, the man is on his way to the blessing.

First, you must believe that there is such a thing as sanctification obtainable today, for the whole church, and therefore for you. If you hesitate at this point, to have mercy upon your poor skeptical soul. seeking holiness for the present, and begin asking God to have mercy upon your poor skeptical soul.

Second, you must confess that you are not sanctified, that your heart is beset with indwelling sin. You are not a proper candidate for the blessing while you are posing as a sanctified soul. When the gospel of full salvation is first preached in some places, there are certain bell sheep in religious circles who fall right in, and let on like they have had the experience of holiness from time immemorial, while they have never claimed to have definitely met the conditions that bring us into the fullness. Some of these individuals have often during the history of their religious profession, shown evidences that they had the carnal mind in them, and in some instances, they have shown dispositions, and done deeds out of harmony with any religious profession whatever. Public confession and the mourner's bench, are the best prescriptions for one of this class.

Third, you must determine in your heart by the grace of God to have this perfect cleansing. If there is anything beneath the sun that you would rather have than this experience, you cannot get

the experience. If you are willing to content yourself without it, you cannot obtain it. The soul that counts no price too dear, that yields up all things a sweet and willing sacrifice to God, that will content itself no longer without the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying fullness, that upon this prays a simple, child-like, receiving prayer, will then and there be made every whit whole. In short, we are sanctified by faith, but the heart is the ground where faith must take root, and the fallow ground must first be broken up by means of the conditions herein suggested, before it can believe for a complete deliverance.

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Chapter 6 HOLINESS EXPERIENCED

The experience and the life of holiness are so closely identified that we will lump them into one subject and call it experience.

The word experience has come to mean in religious literature, a condition of the soul; this condition is supposed to involve satisfaction, semi-satisfaction, or dissatisfaction; rest, partial rest, or unrest. In an experience, the soul either suffers or enjoys.

When we speak of the life of holiness being closely identified with the experience of holiness, we mean to say that when one has the fullness of the blessing, righteousness becomes so identified with his soul and the law of God becomes so precious that he enjoys doing the right thing. For instance, convince him that God wants him to keep the Sabbath, and that day will not be to him a bleak waste, but keeping it will be an unspeakable luxury, and violating it, if such a thing were necessary, would be a very unhappy exercise.

Let him be assured that it is contrary to God's will for him to go to a certain place or do a certain thing, then if we could suppose an iron wheel of fate that made it necessary for him to do this thing, we have a man suffering a bitter ordeal. A man who is crucified with Christ cannot and will not enjoy a thing that the Master disapproves. His delight is in the law of the Lord. Taking pleasure in this, he cannot take pleasure in the opposite. He hates iniquity, he loves righteousness. These two passions, like light and air, can fill the same vessel at the same time.

Man is a free moral agent. God cannot be the author of sin. It is true that in his economy of creation, God has made some things in life unavoidable; he has established some inevitables along the road. But we are not bound to sin; if we were, it would be an inevitable, and God would bear the responsibility.

Now if a Christian is free indeed, if he hates sin, if righteousness is a luxury to him, it is easy to see that he is living the life of liberty; doing as he pleases, because he always pleases to do right. In such a circumstance a man is not under the law. To be under the law is to feel its restraint. But if a man is traveling in the direction that the law points, with "sails well-filled with heavenly breezes," he feels no restraint; he is not under (the influence of) the law, but under (the influence of) grace. He has looked into the perfect law of liberty.

When we speak of an unrestrained life, we do not mean that a man need not curb his physical appetites, control the propensities of his body, and keep his mind from defiling imaginations; in other words, we are not speaking of angelic perfection, but of Christian perfection. A man does not put off his human, but his carnal nature, when he is sanctified. If a man should profess that his human nature was annihilated, he would profess to have no discrimination between pleasant and unpleasant food. He would profess to be immune against all infatuations; no flesh could attract him. Place him where you may, there would be no danger; he would have no capacity for an unholy desire. Now, we know of no man who makes such a profession as this; if there is such a man, he has reached the height of presumption; he is a deluded soul standing on the verge of ruin. Such a man has not reached the climax of faith, but the climax of presumption.

But has faith no mountain top? Is it not possible for the Christian soul to reach that spiritual mount of God where faith sings in triumph over diabolical tempers and passions that are crucified and destroyed (Rom. 6:6)? Because we admit that there is an idea of perfection that is aside from the Scriptures, launching its victims out upon the barren and turbulent sea of fanaticism, have we no right to insist that there is an opposite extreme, an unbelief in the church that shuts the glory of God out of the Christian heart, that limits the Holy One of Israel, and exposes its victims to floods of worldliness and clouds of spiritual darkness?

Yea, there is such a thing as holiness; -- not Wesley's holiness, not Finney's holiness, not Spurgeon's holiness, not my holiness, even if I possess it; but God's holiness. He alone is independently holy, and we are to be as purified branches in the vine. Yea, holiness is as real as the Bible, and an anxious Father is today chastening his children with loving hand, that they might be partakers of his holiness.

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Chapter 7 HOLINESS NECESSARY

The book of Hebrews is written on the subject of soul rest or Christian perfection. It issues more than half a dozen solemn warnings against apostasy. A careful student can easily see that these warnings are invariably coupled with a vigorous exhortation to seek holiness -- to go on unto perfection. The plain teaching is, that a man is converted that he might be sanctified, that he might persevere in the race of life, and wear the victor's crown at last. The Christian who refuses to press into holiness frustrates the grace of God.

The man who enjoys the justifying grace of God is in a dilemma, if you are pleased so to express it. The plan of God is, for him, by entire consecration and implicit faith to be conformed to the image of his Son, entering the experience of holiness. This may be a way of crucifixion; this may lead to paths of reproach; but it will lead to a victory of soul and an eternal blessedness that angels desire to look into.

The alternate is for him to sell his birthright and be led again into captivity. Really, it is as much a privilege and pleasure as it is a duty to dedicate your redeemed powers to God and receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

You may find in yourself a disposition to stagger and falter when you are confronted by your duty to seek holiness, but do not do it. Now is God's day for this full salvation. Wait no longer, but plunge into the fountain; for in waiting, you may grieve the Holy Spirit. The hindrances to your sanctification may be many today, but you need not hope for them to be fewer. There is a reason why you haven't the blessing. As soon as this reason disappears, the blessing will be in your possession.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect through the (cleansing) blood."

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THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

Text: "Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." I Cor. 12:31.

When the apostle wrote these words, he was just finishing a discussion of spiritual gifts, representing their features of importance, and showing that they were bestowed according to the elective choice of God. All are not apostles; all are not prophets; all are not teachers; all do not work miracles; all have not gifts of healing; we do not all speak with tongues, neither do we all interpret. John Wesley translates the first phrase of our text in the form of a mere statement: "Ye covet earnestly the best gifts." This is, no doubt, the sense of the authorized version, although we sometimes make the mistake of looking upon this as a command. It is natural and legitimate that in perusing the catalogue of gifts, we should desire those which would add most to our usefulness and make us the greatest blessing to the human race. But the apostle is now to enter into a discussion of grace.

Our text is the connecting link between the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the epistle; it belongs as much to one of the chapters as it does to the other. It is a blessed thing to enjoy some of the distributed gifts of God; but the apostle, after discussing the gifts, evidently intended to make grace the climax of his subject, implying that the latter is greater than the former; that it is better to be good than to be great, better to be holy than smart, better to be pure, harmless, and undefiled than to be able to heal the sick and raise the dead and speak with the tongue of an archangel.

It has been supposed by some that the excellent way implied in the text is that of morality and church membership, while the more excellent way mentioned is that of regeneration. But before we draw a conclusion, let us examine the subject a little closer. In a vision that I once had, I found myself standing before the judgment throne and viewing the nations as they came up from North, South, East and West, to be judged. First, there came a highway robber from the West, and stood before God. His heart was black with murder, and his hands were red with crime. Next, there came a woman from the slums of a wicked city, fallen, degraded, vile. After this came a common sinner from the ordinary walks of life. He had committed no crimes to degrade him in the eyes of men, but was just an ordinary non-professor of religion.

Then, there came a man and woman from the associations of the Christian Church on earth. They had lived up to the rules, their lives had been approved by the ministry, and highly esteemed by their neighbors. They had liberally supported the institutions of the church, and their lives had not been without prayer and the reading of the Scriptures; only they had never experienced what the Bible calls conversion or the new birth. These two people took their places in the presence of God. When the Judge turned to the robber, he said, "Depart, thou worker of iniquity, into everlasting darkness, for I never knew you." He spoke to the vile woman, and to the ordinary sinner in similar words. There was a look of uncertain hope in the upward glance of the two church members, as the Judge turned to them, but he read to them from the pages of a book which had adorned their center table, and which they had heard interpreted from time to time during their walk on earth.

These are some of the words that he read: "Ye must be born again," "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." After their own hearts had condemned them and they had hung their heads in speechlessness, they received the unhappy sentence and were banished into outer darkness. Now comes the question, Can we suppose that the Apostle Paul, a man who was so loyal to the eternal interest of every soul, would teach us that the moral church member, if unconverted, was on an excellent road? Life is a journey, and every individual travels a path. You may strew my path with flowers, and attend it with bands of music; I may enjoy the approval and praise of all mankind, and live in palaces of luxury; but if my road winds up in hell, it is a terrible road. The dreadfulness of my tomorrow casts a shadow upon all my consolations of today.

"Covet earnestly" means to desire with all your might. Such conditions may fail to bring us the choice of gifts, because they are distributed according to the sovereign will of God. But while the apostle makes this fact plain, he also gives us to understand that the same overwhelming desire for that more excellent experience of grace would not be in vain. The Corinthians who enjoyed regeneration felt that natural impulse to seek for something more. The apostle points out the "something more" that God has provided impartially for every soul. He did not point it out with the indication that they would enjoy it somewhere in the remote future, but he evidently represented an inheritance upon which they might enter today -- a satisfying portion which was at the very door of their hearts. He did not name the experience that he was about to describe; he seemed to be so much in earnest that he had no time to dwell upon technicalities and terms. He at once launched out upon a graphic delineation of the experience of perfect love.

He represented it first by comparison. Mentioning one sublime thing after another, he said, "It is better than any of these." Then he represented it by personification, saying that it was longsuffering, self-denying, meek, forbearing and faithful. He then proceeded to show them, taking knowledge as an example, that all forms of human attainment in this life were imperfect and incomplete; "For now we see through a glass darkly; now I know in part." In contrast with this fact, he shows us that this more excellent experience, this divinely wrought work of love, can be perfect here and now. The apostle's description of this experience was so realistic, and the representation of its beauty and grandeur was so enticing, we have no doubt that all true Christians at Corinth who read the message were filled with a desire for the fullness of the blessing.

No grander words than these were ever used to describe the features of this highest attainment in the Christian life. No dogmatic terms and labels are employed to burden this glorious message, and yet the lines are so distinctly drawn, and the practical definition is so imposing and complete, that it is impossible for us to mistake that he has reference to the "higher life." We know that no babe in Christ, yet carnal, and living on milk, can come up to the standard of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. At the same time, we know that this standard is attainable. It would be a travesty upon the Lord for us to say, as some have said, that such standards as the one set forth in this scripture are only given for us to aim at, with no hope attaining to them. God does not tease his children by holding up to their poor, crushed souls the picture of a desirable attainment in Christian holiness, so that they will long for it and seek it in prayers and tears, never to gain it.

If the Apostle Paul had neglected to tell the Corinthian Christians of the more excellent way, perhaps they would have continued their attempt to make progress along the lines of knowledge and accomplishment. Having begun in the Spirit, they would have sought to be made perfect by the flesh. Their spirituality would have leaked out, and they would have become a proud, self-sufficient human institution, as is the case with many a religious society called a church today. Are we not at fault today as preachers for neglecting to carry the people beyond the first principles of the doctrine of Christ? We are very definite when it comes to repentance, faith, justification, baptism, and so forth, but when we go beyond these first principles, we glide into indefiniteness and have not the courage to take a position and press the people to go forward into the deep things of God. We argue that these things are beyond our comprehension; we do not understand them. But whose fault is it? The Holy Spirit is a liberal teacher, and the Bible is a gold mine of truth. It is our own fault.

One of two things is the matter with us when we fail in this part of our divine commission. Either we are too indolent to seek for truth by diligent prayer and study, or we are too politic to sound a definite note upon these great themes. It will be dreadful to meet either of these charges on the judgment day. We will endeavor to enforce the thought of this sermon by an illustration which we heard used some years ago. A young minister started from some point up the Ohio River on a trip to Memphis by steamboat. He was to have a journey of fourteen days. Some one, who was either ignorant or unkind, told him that he would have to board himself on the trip. He was scarce on means, so he secured a piece of cheese and a large bundle of crackers. When he had gone aboard the boat and paid his passage, he deposited his provisions in his stateroom. From day to day, when the bell was rung for meals in the dining room, he would go to his stateroom and endeavor to satisfy himself on dry cheese and crackers. The further he went, the more unsatisfactory his food supply became. Finally, when the master passion of hunger overcame him, he opened his purse and laid a dollar on the clerk's desk, telling him that he would have to have his supper that night. The clerk smilingly shoved the dollar back to him, and told him that when he paid his passage, his table board was included.

Oh, how he regretted that he had so frequently passed a table loaded with smoking meats and delicious bread, all of which he was entitled to, but had failed to enjoy! He was then only one day's journey from his journey's end. Of course, he feasted the balance of the way.

We heard of an aged minister who attended a holiness camp meeting and listened to the preaching of the second work of grace. When the altar call was made, he pressed his way to the

mercy-seat, and with consecrated heart, he called upon God until the baptism with the Spirit came upon his soul. He then arose with tears of joy in his eyes and said, "For fifty years I have been sounding the gospel trumpet, but was not aware that the fullness of the blessing of Christ was for me until today. I have missed a great deal, but today I have entered in; and I shall feast at the table of my Lord the brief time I have to remain in this world."

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THE END