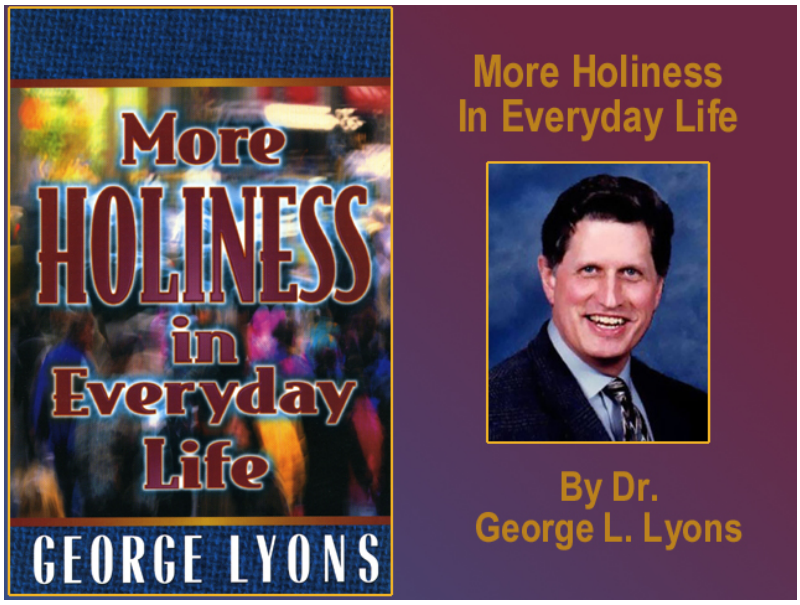
MORE HOLINESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

By Dr. George L. Lyons



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BACK COVER TEXT

**More Holiness
in Everyday Life**

God is holy -- we can be too.

"Be holy, because I am holy." That's the biblical command. That's the desire of a surrendered heart. Unfortunately, in the wear and tear of life, it doesn't always happen that way. How can Christians reconcile the Bible's call to holiness with the rigors of everyday existence?

Join George Lyons on a journey through Scripture as he declares that "holiness is not only the essential characteristic of God's nature but, the central emphasis of His Word." Lyons's concern is not just theory but practice. "More Holiness In Everyday Life" -- where the rubber meets the road.

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About The Author

George Lyons is professor of biblical literature at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho. He is a graduate of Olivet Nazarene University and received his Ph.D. at Emory University. He is the coauthor of "A Dictionary of the Bible and Christian Doctrine in Everyday English" and the author of "Holiness In Everyday Life."

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DEDICATION

To all the Australian Nazarenes who helped fill my family's three brief stays in Australia with wonderful memories. I pray that my words were "the very words of God," that my service was rendered "with the strength God provides," and that all the glory may go to Him!

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PREFACE

The little collection of lectures titled Holiness in Everyday Life was published by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City in 1992. This somewhat larger collection includes more of the same -- More Holiness in Everyday Life.

Although these lectures originated as addresses intended for college students, this is not a book for scholars. Its concern is not primarily a doctrine or even an experience. Its concern is not only theory but also practice---practical holiness. And its concern is not just for a moment but with a lifetime.

I could not have written such a book with a clear conscience were it not for the countless ordinary Nazarene folks from around the world who continue to persuade me in one way or another that holiness is more than a cherished doctrine. I would be less than frank if I did not admit that I have been disappointed at times by the inconsistencies of those who profess the experience of entire sanctification. But where disappointment abounded, grace did much more abound. Time and again the evidence of More Holiness in Everyday Life has outweighed empty professions and renewed my conviction in the truth of our distinguishing doctrine.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks is due three different Nazarene institutions of higher education for providing me the opportunity to prepare and present these lectures. First, the college where I serve as a professor of biblical literature, Northwest Nazarene College (NNC), honored me with an invitation to give the Wordsworth Holiness Lectures in April 1995. Chapters 3, 4, and 7 began with these lectures. The Wordsworth Lectures are sponsored by NNC through a generous gift of the family of John E. Wordsworth, a longtime supporter of NNC. Thanks to Chaplain Gene Schandorff for the invitation to speak and to my friends and colleagues in the Division of Philosophy and Religion at NNC for their encouragement.

An early version of chapter 6 was given in chapel at NNC in March 1996. Thanks to Dr. Samuel Dunn, vice president for academic affairs at NNC, for encouraging me to publish it. NNC generously funded a sabbatical leave during the fall of 1996, during which time all of these chapters were revised to their present form.

Chapters 5 and 6, as well as preliminary versions of chapters 1 and 2, were given at the invitation of Southern Nazarene University (SNU) as the Rothwell Holiness Lectures in March 1996. Thanks is due my friends in the religion faculty at SNU for the honor of being invited to deliver these lectures. Thanks to Dr. Don Dunnington, vice president for academic affairs at SNU, and his wife, Jane, friends of mine for more than 25 years, who hosted me during my stay in Oklahoma City. Thanks is also due my wife, Terre, who graciously cooperated with my being away from home on her birthday in order to give these lectures.

An invitation to teach at the Nazarene Theological College (NTC) in Brisbane, Australia, during my sabbatical leave from NNC gave me the time to revise all of these chapters substantially, particularly chapters 1 and 2, and test them on a variety of audiences. NTC sponsored "Rightly Dividing" seminars on each of the Australian districts during September, October, and November 1996. Thanks to Dr. Robert Dunn, then principal of NTC, for providing us with a place to stay while we lived in Australia, sponsoring the lectures, and helping fund our travels on the world's largest island. Special thanks is also due Rev. Peter Berg, then dean at NTC, for his friendship and encouragement.

I would also like to thank those Australian Nazarenes who hosted my visits. In Western Australia the Dianella Church of the Nazarene in Perth hosted the seminar. Mention needs to be made of Pastors David Warren, John Kerr, and Arthur Lear for their friendship. Thanks to hospitable laypeople Allan and Theo Shellabear, we were able to mix business with pleasure during a family visit in the West.

On the Australian Southern District these lectures were given in October at the Mount Waverley Church of the Nazarene in Melbourne. Thanks to Pastor Robert Fowler for hosting the event.

On the Northern Pacific District some of the lectures were presented again at the Maryborough Church of the Nazarene in November. Thanks to Pastor Roland Hearn for hosting the seminar. Thanks to our friends Peter and Leah Wilson for opening their home and hearts to us during our visit to their church. The early Christian sermon known to us as 1 Peter not only directs, "Be holy in all you do" (1:15), but also offers specific guidance on such practical expressions of holiness as showing hospitality and public speaking: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen" (4:9-11).

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01 -- WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HOLINESS? -- SOME WORDS ABOUT THE WORD

INTRODUCTION

Holiness churches once justified their existence by referring to their God-given mission to spread "scriptural holiness." Today, many of these same denominations seem more intent on fitting into the Evangelical mainstream than on emphasizing a doctrinal distinctive. Were our predecessors in the Holiness Movement correct in so narrowly defining our identity as to make holiness the essential issue? And were they justified in referring to our distinguishing message as "scriptural" holiness?

Before we attempt to discuss the subject of scriptural holiness, it is essential that we clearly understand how the Bible uses the term. This calls for more than a word study. It is not enough to simply list in concordance fashion all the biblical references to "holiness." We must understand how we determine the meanings of the words and the concepts they represent. Thus, the first part of this chapter is an exercise in what biblical scholars call hermeneutics. "Herman who?" you say.

The Greek word from which this English technical term is derived means simply "interpretation." But it is used to refer to the study of the principles and procedures involved in the process of communicating and interpreting meaning by means of the spoken or written word. It is an attempt to make explicit the assumptions that motivate an interpreter's approach to the task of explaining the meaning of literature, biblical or otherwise. Hermeneutics concerns the process of moving from a particular ancient biblical passage to its meaning and relevance for

contemporary readers. Almost everything we communicate we do by means of combinations of words. "Precious terms" like "holiness" become so familiar that we sometimes fail to appreciate how they work.

Words are strange things. It is important to realize that the meaning of words is conventional and contextual. Allow me to explain with a neutral example. Then I will explain the relevance of this side street to our study of holiness.

CONVENTION

There is no particular reason why putting together the letters d and o and g should refer to a hairy canine. It is pure convention that dictates that the word "dog" identifies such creatures. In English we have a number of different words referring to the same animal. Under certain circumstances we might refer to a particular dog as a "hound"; a "puppy," "pup," or "pooch"; or a "mutt," "cur," or "mongrel." The denotation of all these words is essentially the same. But their connotations are different. That is, they all name the same thing, but they also convey a variety of other information about that thing. We usually think of a "hound" as a hunting dog. A "puppy" or "pup" is a young dog. We probably like the dogs we call "pooches." We use "mutts," "curs," and "mongrels" for inferior dogs we probably don't like. Young children may call their dogs "bow-wow." Dog breeders use "bitch" as a perfectly proper term for a female dog. But its other impolite use leads most of us to avoid it, lest we unnecessarily offend. People sometimes use poodle, Chihuahua, collie, Doberman, or schnauzer to identify a particular breed of dog. Depending on our past experiences, the names Rover or Spot, Rin-Tin-Tin or Lassie, Benji or Beethoven may make us think "dog."

That words are purely conventional designations for things is clear to anyone who knows another language. The usual term for dog in French is chien. In German it is Hund. It is no coincidence this German word sounds like the English word "hound." The two languages are historically related. The meaning of words is conventional. There is no reason why the English word for dog could not have been "timrav." If we could all agree to use the word with this reference, that would be precisely what it meant. If we were to take the letters d and o and g and spell them backward, we would get the word (capitalized) "God." But "dog" and "God" are not opposites. The same coincidence in reverse spellings is not true for the other words for dog, in English or other languages.

When our son was a little boy, he could not say his "g"s. One beautiful fall day he was watching his mother hang the laundry on the clothesline. Out of the blue he commented, "Dod yike outside." Terre thought for a moment and replied, "Yes, Nathanael, God loves the world He created." Nathanael corrected her, "Nod Dod, Mom, dod." Only when my wife noticed our miniature schnauzer basking in the sun nearby did she understand. "Yes, Nathanael, Gretchen likes to be outdoors on nice days."

Despite their shared letters, "God" and "dog" are not to be confused. But sometimes Americans use the word "dog" in confusing ways. I have heard some people refer to a poorly running car as a "dog." I have heard some impolite men refer to women they consider unattractive as "dogs." We are not surprised to hear a cooked sausage called a "hot dog." When I was young, people said, "Hot dog!" while kids today would say, "Cool dude!" Strange how language changes! Because the meanings of words are conventional meanings change to a greater or lesser extent over time.

CHANGE

In Bible times, dogs were not considered pets as they are today. Shepherds despised them as predators and scavengers, like coyotes or hyenas. For the Hebrew people, "dog" always had a negative connotation. To call someone a "dog" was a demeaning insult. It expressed the speaker's disgust for that person. In Deut. 23:18 (KJV), the word "dog" refers to male prostitutes connected with pagan temples. In New Testament times, Jewish people sometimes insulted non-Jews by calling them "dogs" (Matt. 15:21-28).

Of course, the people of the Bible did not use the English word "dog"; they used its Hebrew or Greek equivalents. The Hebrew word is keleb. You know this word from the name of the other good spy who, with Joshua, brought back an optimistic report from Canaan (Num. 13--14). We don't know why his parents gave him the strange name Caleb -- "dog." The Greek word for dog happens to be "kyon". This is the source of our English word "canine," which we use to refer to the whole species of animals we call dogs. But it is also the source of our word "cynic."1

This is more than enough about dogs. Perhaps it has persuaded you of my point: Words are strange things. Their meaning is determined by convention. But words are not purely arbitrary. We cannot expect to be understood if we use the word "dog" when we mean "God."

CONCEPTS

Obviously it is easier to identify the denotation of the word "dog" than that of the word "holiness." A dog is something we recognize with our five senses. Holiness, like love or beauty, is a concept or idea of the mind. It is more difficult to describe something we cannot touch with our hands, see with our eyes, taste with our tongue, smell with our nose, or hear with our ears. Some wag has said that "marriage based on puppy love leads to a dog's life." Because romantic love is difficult to identify precisely, some people confuse it with feelings of physical attraction, infatuation, or even sympathy. But most people would agree that there are certain characteristics that distinguish true love from all of these counterfeits. You'll have to read another book if you're looking for help on this subject, however.

TASTE

We have all heard the saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Beauty is difficult to define because it is, to a certain extent, a matter of taste. We could never understand why our friend Ann considered Doberman pinschers beautiful. Vicious, yes; beautiful, hardly. Nor could we appreciate her opinion of the grooming of our miniature schnauzer as silly. That we've owned three schnauzers is evidence of our taste in dogs. Beauty is sometimes merely a matter of subjective opinion. And it is impossible to say who's right and who's wrong on such matters.

VALUES

Different opinions about beauty are also because of differences in values. Some people judge a "beautiful" automobile based on its styling. Others are more impressed by its model name, fuel economy, acceleration, safety features, or comfort. Still others judge a car's beauty by its price tag. Just so with people. Some are impressed by outward characteristics, others by inner character. What we consider beautiful may tell others more about us than about the person or thing we so evaluate. Even a casual inspection of your church parking lot should convince you that Christians do not agree on what makes for a beautiful car. Or, perhaps, that beauty was not an issue in their choice of cars. Choices between models of cars is apparently not a moral choice -- one between right and wrong. And since cars are not mentioned in the Bible, we expect little help from Scripture in making our choices.

MORALITY

Even matters of personal taste and values can become moral issues. And our words sometimes betray our value judgments. The good, old-fashioned King James Version word "fornication" does not mean the same thing as the neutral expression "premarital sexual relations." It does denote that, among other things; but its connotation makes it clear that the activity it describes is negatively evaluated. Fornication refers to extramarital sex and identifies it as morally wrong.

Just so, "murder" is not the same as "killing." Murder is the "wrongful taking of another human life." No one who understands English would ever say, "That murder was justified." Our moral values influence the words we choose.

We know from Scripture that it is wrong to acquire a car by stealing it. Or knowingly to buy a stolen car, even if we give to missions the money we save in the bargain. We may refuse to buy a car we cannot afford so as to avoid making an idol of a vehicle or of ourselves. But few moral issues are simple choices between black and white. Life's tough choices often take us into various shades of gray. If we share the Wesleyan values of industry, frugality, and generosity, we may decide not to buy an extravagant car that we really do not need. There are things more eternally important than driving a late model luxury sports car.

John Wesley frequently warned his followers: Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can. The problem is, of course, agreeing what is extravagant. We can always find someone whose wealth makes us seem relatively poor. Middle-class Christians are less likely to admit that, compared to two-thirds of the world, we are the rich, self-indulgent ones. And so we modify Wesley: Earn all you can, spend all you can, can all that's left, and sit on the can.

AUTHORITY

And what about holiness? Is it, like romantic love, sometimes confused with counterfeits that we can mistake for the genuine article? Is it, like our taste in cars, merely a matter of personal preferences? Are there socially and culturally relative criteria by which holiness is recognized? Most Christians would agree that Scripture, not our personal tastes or social values, should define the life of holiness. The difficulty is: Scripture must be interpreted.

Some Christians claim that the Bible is their only authoritative Source of their faith and practice. They say that, but we know better. Let's be honest about it: A great variety of things influence Christian beliefs and behaviors-our parents, our upbringing, our social class, our national origin, our personality type, our gender, and on and on.

If you have ever talked seriously with Christians from another denomination than your own, you have seen how doctrinal convictions shade the way they read the Bible. Of course, we would never do that! Or would we? Wesleyans have been more self-conscious about the other sources of authority that influence our theology and moral judgments than have most other Evangelical Christians. It is not simply that we have resigned ourselves to the inevitable. It is not that we admit, "Of course, I read the Bible through Wesleyan-Holiness tinted glasses. But I'm no more biased than anyone else. And who's to say that my prejudices are any less appropriate than yours?"

Wesleyans acknowledge that there are, always have been, and ought to be four major authoritative sources to which Christians may appeal in defining our faith and practice. These four sources have been called, in an expression coined by the late Methodist theologian Albert Outlet, the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral." They are Scripture, Christian tradition, experience, and reason. Of course, Scripture is the primary source. But we insist that it is entirely appropriate to appeal to these other sources to assist us in the essential task of interpreting the Scriptures. We do so, not to avoid heeding what Scripture clearly teaches, but to steer clear of novelty, dishonesty, and stupidity in our interpretation.

INTERPRETATION

We may presume that the one true God, who inspired the Bible, must have a precise idea of what He means by the term "holiness." But even so, we must admit that He did not choose to define it uniformly and unambiguously in the Bible.2 Different biblical authors seem to use the term in slightly different ways. Perhaps it is because holiness is an abstract concept. Perhaps it is because they emphasized different aspects of a reality too complex to be grasped from any one perspective. Perhaps it is because they lived at different times and in different places and come from various social situations.

The Bible was not written in one sitting by a single person. It emerged over hundreds, even thousands, of years, through the efforts of scores of human authors. A thorough study of scriptural holiness would call for an examination of the use of the term across history and throughout the entire Bible. Few scholars have attempted such a comprehensive study.3 But it is far more than this little book even tries to accomplish. Its goal is much more modest -- to help ordinary people understand enough about scriptural holiness to respond appropriately to God's call for holiness in everyday life.

COMMUNICATION

It seems reasonable to assume that biblical authors wrote to be understood -- that they wrote for the purpose of communicating an intelligible message. If so, they had to adopt the conventional meanings of the words they used. They could not use the word "dog" when they meant "God." Nor could they simply invent new words that no one had ever used before. To use our earlier example, how would anyone know that "timrav" meant "dog" if biblical authors simply coined the term for their purposes? Just so, they must have used the word "holiness" with a denotation and connotation at least partially understood by their original readers.

If biblical authors wrote to be understood, why are so many passages in the Bible difficult to understand? And why do people disagree about the interpretation of the Bible? There are understandable reasons: We do not bring to our reading of the Bible all of the assumptions its first readers did. And we bring to our reading a host of modern assumptions that they did not. Times change and cultures differ even within the same time period. Writers and speakers always take for granted a great deal in what they write and say. An outsider eavesdropping on the conversation around a family dinner table would need some explanation to understand fully the "insider talk." The same is true when we "eavesdrop" on literature written in another time and place and with different cultural assumptions than our own. It is inappropriate to interpret the Bible without an awareness of this unexpressed, tacit dimension of communication. The problem is: Which extra-biblical assumptions are appropriately brought to our reading of the Bible? Disagreements on this are responsible for most of the differences in the interpretation of controversial biblical passages.

English speakers in most of the (formerly British) Commonwealth of Nations use "boot" to refer to what Americans would call the "trunk" of a car. But in both cultures writers also use "boot" to refer to a high-top shoe and the process of starting up a computer. But what does it mean for a male employer to "give his employees the boot"? An American might say he "fires" them; an Australian, that he "sacks" them. Neither would take this to mean that the employer puts his employees in a trunk, that he physically kicks them out of his business, that he gives them a fresh start, that he ignites them, or that he puts them inside a paper bag.

No one familiar with elephants imagines that their trunk is a rear storage compartment. Why? Because the insider status of interpreters allows them to take for granted the same things as do contemporary authors and speakers. Problems in understanding arise when communication takes place across different historical periods or cultures. But misinterpretation also results when hearers do not give adequate attention to the context of a speaker's words.

Words are strange things. Their meanings are not merely arbitrary. But in the communication of meaning, context is a decisive factor. We must learn the meaning of a word by its use at a given time in history and by its use within a particular body of literature.

CONTEXT

We learn the meanings of words by their use within specific contexts. Interpretation takes place within at least two contexts: historical and literary.

Historical Context. Our discussion of the word "dog" demonstrates that the meanings and connotations of words change across time. Words may be used literally or figuratively. They are used with cultural assumptions attached. When biblical authors used the word "dog" figuratively, they did not use it with the same force we assign it. We cannot expect to understand the Bible's words without knowing something of the way they were used when the Scriptures were written. It would be a mistake to impose our feelings about "man's best friend" when we read about "dogs" in the Bible. Just so, we may not impose our theology of holiness on the biblical authors. This would be like someone assuming that Americans eat "steaming canines" at ball games -- you know, "hot dogs"! Since we are 2,000 to 4,000 years removed from the days of the Bible, the task of interpretation is seldom easy.

Obviously, a knowledge of the culture and history of biblical times will help us avoid misinterpreting. But even specialists disagree as to its precise meaning in some passages. The original readers of the Bible did not need to consult commentaries and Bible dictionaries to understand it. They lived in the same time and culture as the biblical author. They knew firsthand what he wrote about. Their

personal experience provided them with an immediate knowledge of historical context. Our world is very different from theirs.

Good interpreters of the Bible must know enough about the ancient world to avoid two errors. They must distinguish what people in Bible times took for granted that we do not. And they must distinguish what we take for granted that people then did not (and could not) assume. Only an uninformed reader of the King James Version might misunderstand the word "press" in Mark 2:4. Who would assume that the friends of the paralyzed man were unable to get to Jesus because He was surrounded by "reporters"? Modern translations remove the confusion by using the word "crowd." Often comparing translations is enough to prevent misunderstandings based on historical and cultural differences. But the historical and cultural gap between then and now is hardly the major reason for difficulties in interpreting the Bible.

Literary Context. Let's say a non-English speaker points to the creature we call a dog and says a word we don't recognize. Is it safe to assume that he is using the word for dog in his language? Perhaps. But he might be commenting on the dog's odor or color or disposition. He might be identifying the dog's name or breed or owner. It is difficult to be certain unless we know some other words in his language.

Words are seldom used in isolation. The words that precede and follow them provide the literary context in which interpretation takes place. We know enough about Bible times to recognize that biblical authors did not use "dog" to refer to a malfunctioning automobile. But how do we learn what they did mean?

From historical and cultural research we can learn how other ancient authors used the word "dog." But historical context can tell us only what meanings were possible (or impossible) in a given time period or within a certain culture. The usage of a word in a particular literary context alone tells us which possible meaning is the most probable. The King James Version translates Deut. 23:18 fairly literally from the Hebrew: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD." The obvious parallelism between "whore" and "dog" correctly led the NIV translators to an interpretive translation using the words "female prostitute" and "male prostitute." But the average reader of the NIV would be totally unaware of the colorful language found in the original.

We know that a "greenhouse" is not the same as a "green house." Abraham Lincoln noted that a "horse chestnut" is not to be confused with a "chestnut horse." We cannot take the words of the Bible, dump them into a big hat, shake them up, dump them out on the table, and expect them to convey the same message they do in their present arrangement. The precise meaning of words -- their denotation and connotation -- is determined by their context.

ETYMOLOGY

That the word "dog" originally referred to a canine does not assist us in understanding what a speaker means when he or she says, "Bob drove his dog to work again today." Attention to the context of these words will help us decide whether Bob forcefully led his greyhound to his place of employment at the racetrack or used a worn-out Ford as a means of transportation to his own job. The meaning of words is determined by shared conventions and by context, not by etymology.

Etymology is the study of the origin of words. The origin of the term "cynical" from the Greek word for dog tells us almost nothing about its meaning. The word "dandelion' -- the pesky flowering lawn weed suburban Americans spend their summer Saturdays trying to eliminate -- comes from a French expression meaning "tooth of the lion." But such information does not help us understand the meaning of the English term at all.

My name, George, comes from a Greek word meaning "farmer." But it was merely coincidence that I married a woman named Terre, whose name in Latin and French means "earth." Or was it? The word "homely" originally referred to a woman who was a superb homemaker. But just try convincing any wife that her husband is paying her a compliment when he calls her that!

It has sometimes been noted that the Greek word for church is composed of two words meaning "called out." But that historical information is virtually irrelevant for understanding how people used the word in biblical times. For most Greek speakers it simply meant an "assembly" or "gathering of people." For Greek-speaking Jews, however, its use in their translation of the Bible led them to understand the term to mean "the true people of God."

Most words have a history. But we must not assume that a word in a particular sentence means everything it may have meant throughout its history. No, meaning is determined by conventional usage within a particular context in time and within a particular body of literature.

So what does all this discussion about canines and convention, concepts, communication, and context have to do with anything, particularly with our study of holiness?

SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS

The meanings of "holiness" and related words in the Bible are, like every other word, merely conventional. The biblical concept of holiness is more decisive than any word used to label it. There is nothing sacred about the term itself? After all, the biblical authors used different words in Hebrew and Greek than our English words. What matters is not the word but its meaning. If the word "holiness" fails to communicate this meaning to us or our hearers, we must find other terms that more adequately characterize the meaning of the biblical concept.

But before we abandon a perfectly good word, we must understand it ourselves and be able to communicate its meaning to others. The biblical meaning of holiness is to be discovered by careful study of the Bible itself. We must not forget that Wesleyans recognize four major sources of doctrinal authority: Scripture, Christian tradition, experience, and reason. But we also insist that whatever is not contained in Scripture is not to be made an article of faith. The Bible must be the bedrock Foundation for any biblical doctrine of holiness. Biblical theology distinguishes what the Bible teaches from what depends on other authorities. We cannot begin with our own holiness theology and go to the Bible for proof texts that seem to support our pet views and still claim to preach scriptural holiness. The scriptural doctrine of holiness is to be discovered inductively, not deductively. That is, it must be based on generalizations derived from a wide array of specific biblical passages. It is not legitimate to begin with our doctrinal conclusions and cast about for proof texts to validate them.

By a careful selection and organization of passages, it is possible to claim biblical support for almost any opinion, no matter how true or false. Cults have demonstrated that it is possible to prove almost anything by this proof-texting approach. We cannot impose our theological conclusions about holiness on the Bible and honestly claim that Scripture is the Source of our faith and practice. What the Bible says is not the last word in our theology; it is the first word. What the Bible says must be interpreted and applied. Tradition, experience, and reason will inevitably contribute to our theology, but they must not circumvent the clear teachings of Scripture.

HOLINESS TERMINOLOGY

To define "scriptural holiness" we must begin with words. But this is only the beginning. To understand the precise meanings of words, we must study them within their various biblical contexts. The English words "holiness" and "holy" come from the Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) roots of our language. In Old English "holiness" referred to the state of being "whole" or "healthy.... Sanctify" and "sanctification" come from the Romance (Norman-Latin) origins of English. The Latin verb sanctifico meant "to make sacred," that is, "to set apart for the service of the gods."

The underlying Hebrew and Greek words both English word groups translate are from the same word families.5 In the Hebrew Old Testament, the abstract noun qodesh is usually translated "holiness." Its use in contrast to the "profane" or "common"6 suggests that its essential nature is "that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred."7 Thus, to speak of the "Holy One" (using the adjective qadosh as a noun) is to refer to God. The Hebrew verb qadash means "to make holy" or "to sanctify."

The Temple is called miqdash, the "holy place" or "sanctuary." Strangely enough, the Hebrew word qadesh, from this same word group, refers to male and female temple prostitutes.8 From the Canaanite perspective, these were priests and priestesses set apart for the worship of the god Baal and his mother-consort Asherah, whom they called "Holiness." From Israel's perspective such "holy men and women" in Canaan's idolatrous fertility religions were far from morally upright. Their "holiness" consisted solely in their total devotion to their perverse gods. Their corrupt morality matched that of the deities whom they served.

Given the very different literary contexts of these Hebrew terms, it would be inappropriate to translate them, despite their common origin, with the same English words. In the New Testament, "holiness" usually translates the Greek word hagiasmos. The word hagiasmos is derived from the adjective hagios, which means "holy." Thus, holiness is the quality or state of being holy. To be holy is to be "set apart," "unique."

"Sanctification" translates the Greek word hagiosyne. The noun, also derived from hagios, refers to the act or process by which one is made to be or recognized as holy. The plural form of the adjective hagios becomes the noun hagioi, which we customarily translate "saints." It obviously refers to "holy people." Thus we might translate the verb hagiazo "I saintify" or "I holify." But standard practice calls for "I sanctify" or "I make holy."

Scripture refers to God as "holy" for two reasons. The first derives from what theologians identify as His transcendence. That is, He is utterly distinct from His creation. He alone is the Creator; all else that exists is His creation. He is unique; there is only one God. Second, God is uniquely just and loving in His dealings with His creatures. That is, He is holy in His being and behavior.

God alone is holy in this underived sense. People may be holy in the derived sense that they belong to God, the uniquely Holy One. "I am the LORD, who makes you holy" (Exod. 31:13; Lev. 22:32). "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.... I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45; see 19:2). "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God" (20:7). "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (v. 26). It is expected that God's people will behave in a manner consistent with their special calling to know Him and make Him known. "Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The sheer number of references in the Bible to holiness terminology makes it impossible to survey all of them here. So how do we proceed? How do we go about establishing a biblical basis for a doctrine of holiness? Sometimes we Holiness

people have held our distinguishing doctrine up to ridicule because we've preached entire sanctification from inappropriate texts. We've "preached it where it ain't." It is unreasonable to expect that every passage that uses the word "holiness" or "sanctification" should teach every aspect of holiness doctrine or refer to a second work of grace.

Consider John 17:19, for example. Here Jesus' high-priestly prayer includes the words "I sanctify myself." No one imagines that Jesus claims to cleanse himself from original sin or fill himself with the Holy Spirit. We do not presume that Jesus' sanctification was a second work of grace, subsequent to His conversion from a life of sin. In this verse Jesus' self-sanctification refers negatively to the paradox of being in the world but not of the world (vv. 1114). Positively, it refers to His unswerving commitment to the mission for which the Father sent Him into the world (see vv. 3, 8, 18, 23, 25, 26). Jesus would not avoid the task of making God's love fully known, although it would mean His death on the Cross. Jesus' prayer for the sanctification of His disciples (and for those who were to believe because of them) in verse 17 must be understood in this same light. At the very least, holiness must involve wholehearted commitment to God's costly redemptive mission-a commitment made in behalf of the people of the world, but without compromise to the world's values.

This passage does not exhaust all the Bible says about holiness, but we cannot claim to preach "scriptural holiness" unless we include what it teaches here. To refuse to preach holiness "where it ain't" is not to restrict ourselves to those passages in which explicit holiness terminology appears. The essential content of scriptural holiness may be found in substance in passages in which none of these terms appear. This is not simply the view of a Holiness partisan. The terms "holiness" and "sanctification" are noticeably absent from Paul's letter to the Galatians. Instead, it refers to the freedom from the slavery to sin that comes from keeping in step with the Spirit.

In a recent book by a leading publisher from the Reformed tradition, William M. Ramsay writes: "Galatians is not about 'justification by faith,' as Luther and his followers through the centuries have believed. It is about sanctification by faith. It is not about how one gets sins forgiven. It is about how one is to live when that initial forgiveness has been received."9 It is not the terminology but the meaning of the terms that is decisive. Holiness is a crucial biblical teaching. But it is "the whole tenor of Scripture," not any single passage or any pet interpretation of Scripture, that proclaims scriptural holiness.

TRANSITION

If we begin our study of holiness with the Bible, not with anyone's favorite theology -- not ours, not the Calvinists', not the Charismatics' -- where would we end up? And where in the Bible should we begin?

We could begin with Genesis and read through to Revelation. But a concordance may save us some time by pointing out where the terms "holiness, ... sanctify, ... sanctification," and other related terms appear in the Bible. This would allow us to see how much of these passages uses these terms in context. But nearly 900 references makes this no simple task. A quick inspection of the concordance reveals that most New Testament references to holiness terminology are found in the letters of Paul. Of these, the majority of the references to sanctification are in 1 Thessalonians. If terminology proves anything, this book must be a crucial document in any account of the biblical understanding of holiness.

The frequent and explicit holiness terminology in this brief letter is particularly noteworthy.10 There are more references to "holiness" per square inch here than anywhere else in the entire Bible. Since time does permit us the luxury of an exhaustive study, 1 Thessalonians seems an appropriate place to begin. And so, without further delay, let us undertake a brief study of holiness in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

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02 -- HOLINESS IN 1 THESSALONIANS -- AN OVERVIEW

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Sometime around A.D. 50, during Paul's so-called second missionary journey, the apostle came to Thessalonica from Philippi on the great military highway called the Via Egnatia. Both cities were located in the Roman province of Macedonia, in what is today northern Greece. These cities recall the exploits some four centuries earlier of the famous Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. Philippi was named for his father, Philip; and Thessalonica, for his half sister. Paul was accompanied on his visit by his associates Silas and Timothy. (See I Thess. 1:1, 5-8; 2:1-14; 3:1-6; Phil. 4:16; and Acts 17:1-10; 18:5.)

Paul describes the circumstances of his visit in 1 Thess. 2:1-2: "You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition." Paul assigns to God alone the credit for the courage that enabled him to preach under such circumstances (see 1:5 and 2:13). And so it was God who was responsible for the remarkable conversions of these pagan Gentiles from their former idolatry (1:9).

We do not know for certain how long Paul ministered among the Thessalonians. It must have been for no less than a few weeks (see Acts 17:2) but may have been several months. During his stay Paul plied his trade of tent making (1 Thess. 2:9). And more than once his generous Philippian church sent him financial assistance to support his mission in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16). He stayed

long enough to establish an affectionate relationship of mutual trust with his converts (1 Thess. 1:5-7; 2:6-8, 10-12, 19-20) but not long enough to be convinced they were ready to be left on their own when he was forced to leave the city. The new Christian congregation developed quickly and in a gratifying, even exemplary, way. But opposition forced Paul to move on prematurely (see Acts 17:5-10; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).

From Thessalonica he went to Berea, from there to Athens and then on to Corinth, from where he must have written this letter (see Acts 17:10--18:5; 1 Thess. 2:17--3:10). How much time passed between his departure and this letter is impossible to know, but it must have been no more than a few weeks or months. Paul writes of the emotional stress surrounding his forced separation from his converts and of his frustrated efforts to return to Thessalonica:

"But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you -- certainly I, Paul did, again and again -- but Satan stopped us .... So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy... to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials .... For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless" (1 Thess. 2:17-18; 3:1-3, 5).

Timothy's mission to Thessalonica was a complete success. His return to Paul and his report of their perseverance as Christians is the immediate occasion of Paul's first Thessalonian letter.

"But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith" (3:6-10).

Paul was overjoyed by the news Timothy brought of the Thessalonians' faithfulness. Although he had nothing but praise for them as Christians, he was still concerned that their faith was somehow deficient. He sent the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians as a substitute for the face-to-face visit he longed and prayed for, It seems reasonable to presume that he wrote what he would have said had he been there in person.

THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF 1 THESSALONIANS

First Thessalonians is an occasional letter. It is occasional because it was written in response to a real-life situation. It is a genuine letter, not simply a sent theological treatise. It has all of the usual features of letters written during the Hellenistic age and Paul's other letters, but with one exception. Normally Paul offers thanks to God for his readers following his opening salutations, only to move on to other matters at hand. But here thanksgiving seems to be the matter at hand.

First Thess. 1:2 through 3:13 is concerned entirely with thanksgiving to God for the faithfulness of these new Christians (see esp. 1:2-3; 2:13; and 3:9). Even when Paul turned to encouragement and exhortation in chapters 4 and 5, his overflowing gratitude for the Thessalonians was obvious.

THE MAJOR TEACHINGS OF 1 THESSALONIANS

Paul's letters are not theology textbooks. There are no logically organized sections devoted to such topics as the doctrine of God, anthropology, hamartiology, or soteriology. The theology found in Paul's letters is pastoral and occasional not systematic. Paul writes as a concerned founding pastor to recent converts who need encouragement.

But pastoral theology is real theology. And occasional theology is often more obviously relevant to everyday life than the speculative theories we sometimes call theology. In addition to its attention to sanctification, 1 Thessalonians also offers instruction on the important theological topics of divine election and eschatology. (There is also a dose connection between the three doctrines in 2 Thess. 2:13-15.)

ELECTION

Christians of the Holiness tradition tend to neglect the doctrine of divine election. In reaction to the excessive claims of classical Calvinism, we underemphasize this significant biblical truth. We need to be reminded, as the doctrine of election does, that it is God's gracious call that makes it possible for us to be numbered among the saved. God takes the initiative in salvation. The doctrine of election gives us the sober reminder that we do not simply choose to become Christians, whenever we want, on our own terms. It is a reminder that conversion and entire sanctification -- in fact, all that God does in our lives -- are not destinations, but vocations, callings. The Christian life is a pilgrimage undertaken by invitation only. It may begin with a crisis moment, such as turning from idols, but serving God is of necessity a process (see 1 Thess. 1:10).

Faith is not an end in itself. We are not converted simply to be converted. We are called to a life to be lived on the basis of that new relationship with Christ. The doctrine of election is also a reminder that our faith alone in the offer of God for salvation is not sufficient. Were it not for God's call we could never respond in faith. Were it not for His grace, our repentance would never bring forgiveness. Salvation

does not depend on us. It is not our repentance that saves us. It is not our faith that saves us. It is not our obedience that saves us. It is God who saves us.

So why do we hear so little about the doctrine of election in our churches? Unlike some Christian traditions, the churches of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition are persuaded that divine election is not effective alone. It is not as if God chooses some to be saved to the exclusion of others. We believe that His call is extended to everyone and that everyone who responds in faithfulness to His call will be saved. Were it not for His call, no one could ever become a Christian. But, sadly, there are some whom God calls who do not accept their election, who fail to serve in the office for which they have been elected, who refuse to live worthy of His call. And some who respond at first later fall away for one reason or another. As Jesus put it, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14, KJV).

It is difficult to miss Paul's emphasis on the doctrine of election as he rehearses the impressive evidence of the Thessalonians' conversions to Christ. "We know.., that [God] has chosen you .... [for] when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thess. 1:4; 2:13).

Their faithfulness was all the more impressive because they knew that living as Christians in a hostile environment would not be easy. They knew of Paul's sufferings (2:2). And he had given them fair warning that they too would suffer for their faith (3:3-4). Their endurance of suffering made them imitators of Paul and his colleagues, of the churches in Judea, and of the Lord Jesus himself (1:5-6; 2:14-15). What's more, it made them examples of perseverance for believers elsewhere in Macedonia and Achaia (1:710). Achaia was the Roman province in southern Greece, where Paul's churches at Corinth and Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1) were located.

It is Paul's celebration of these tangible expressions of the Thessalonians' election and vital Christian faith that prompt his three-chapter thanksgiving. "We remember before our God and Father the practical proof of your faith, the labor motivated by your love, and the perseverance inspired by your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:3, author's paraphrase; see also 5:8, where the familiar triad of faith, hope, and love again appears; cf. Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; and Col. 1:4-5). Their faith, hope, and love demonstrate their divine election (see 1 Thess. 1:4). In 1:5-10, Paul offers two further proofs of their election: first, the character of his proclamation of the gospel (v. 5), and second, the character of their response to the gospel (vv. 6-10). In 2:1-16, he expands on these proofs in the same order, this time giving more lengthy attention to his character (vv. 1-12) and referring more briefly to theirs (vv. 13-16).

Paul offered no criticisms of the Thessalonians' Christian conduct, even though they were recent converts from paganism, only praise. He made a special point of encouraging them to continue in the way of life they were already pursuing.

"We instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more .... Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more .... Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing .... You, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness" (1 Thess. 4:1, 9-10; 5:11, 4-5).

The Thessalonians' conversions were not at all deficient. They were genuine Christians, even exemplary Christians. Yet, despite Paul's confidence in them, he sent Timothy, "our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ," back to Thessalonica (3:2; see 2 Pet. 1:10).

Paul considered it possible that the Thessalonians, despite God's election and the genuineness of their conversions, might lose their faith and be lost.

ESCHATOLOGY

Paul's concern that the Thessalonians might lose their faith was not because of the inadequacy of their conversions but because of the contingency of salvation. Salvation is not only a past event and a present experience but also a future expectation.

"You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath .... You are all sons of the light and sons of the day.... But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him" (1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:5, 8-10).

Christians live "between the times." Christ's death in the past makes salvation universally possible. To make salvation individually personal, He invites people to turn from their old lives of sin to the service of God and lives of holiness. Those who accept His invitation in the present already live with Him as children of that future day when salvation will be complete. Only then will believers be "forever... with the Lord" (4:17; see 2 Thess. 2:13-15). In the meantime, they are called "to live lives worthy of God, who calls [them] into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). Salvation in the fullest sense is a future hope -- something we will receive if we remain faithful in the present.

Paul discusses such aspects of eschatology (the doctrine of last things) as the second coming of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, and the final

Judgment. But he does not do so merely to satisfy the curiosity of his readers. Eschatology describes the ultimate goal of election -- final salvation. God's call to salvation in the past and the prospect of divine judgment in the future are important motivations for holy living in the present. Both election and eschatology motivate us to prepare for life's most important "final exam."

During the last semester of my senior year in college, I experienced the transforming power of undeserved confidence on a human level. Being newly married and working three jobs while going to school full-time was a difficult juggling act. As the term drew to a close, it was obvious that I would not be able to complete a major paper on time. An eleventh hour conference with the professor only deepened my despair. I showed him the research I had gathered and the preliminary work I had finished on the paper. But days of work remained to be done, and I had only hours. Because I was a graduating senior, the deadline for grades was earlier than I had expected. Despite sleepless nights and intense days, the deadline came and passed, and the paper was still incomplete. The day after grades were due, I sheepishly knocked on Professor Woodruff's office door, prepared to accept the worst. When I asked him what grade he had turned in for my unfinished class, he said, "I know that you'll finish the paper and that it will be a good one. So I gave you an A." An A! I was shocked. Elated. Empowered! His generous expressions of confidence would not let me give him anything less than the best paper I had ever written. And it was not because of my efforts, but because his counsel and high expectations enabled me to do what would otherwise have been impossible.

This is not to suggest that Christians somehow earn salvation on the "buy now, pay later" credit plan. There is no way ever to deserve God's gracious call. We remain unworthy, but His call transforms us into people we could never be apart from aligning our lives with His ambitious plans for us. To live "worthy of God" is to live now in ways that are consistent with our future destiny. It is to become what God's grace alone makes possible. It is to be "genuinely sanctified."1 But the doctrine of eschatology is an important reminder that the time for second chances eventually runs out. It is also a reminder that only in heaven is our time of probation past and our destiny sealed so that we may live forever with the Lord. Those whose doctrine of "eternal security" leads them to insist, "Once saved, always saved," are partly right. The problem is: We are not saved in that eschatological sense until we hear the pearly gates click closed behind us.

HOLINESS

The doctrine of sanctification, as 1 Thessalonians presents it, is intimately related to the doctrines of election and eschatology. A holy God calls believers to lives of holiness as the essential preparation for life in eternity with Him. This is clear from Paul's two prayers for the sanctification of the Thessalonians in his first letter. Between these two prayers, Paul appeals to them to allow God to sanctify them.

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.... May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (3:12 -- 4:12; 5:23-24).

SUMMARY

It is impossible to demonstrate all that Holiness churches have said about entire sanctification on the basis of 1 Thessalonians alone. But neither Wesley nor Wesleyans have ever claimed that their theology was based exclusively on this or any other scripture. Experience, tradition, and reason are essential supportive sources of this and every other Christian doctrine.

And the Bible has much more to say about holiness than what we find in I Thessalonians. But there is much in here that lends support to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. Although there is much more we could say, this much is obvious on the basis of this letter:

1. Sanctification is something God longs to do in the lives of believers. God calls believers to live holy lives and can be trusted to provide the ability to fulfill what His call requires through His gift of the Holy Spirit. God is not content that pagans simply become believers. He wants them to turn from their old lives to demonstrate their new allegiance to Him. God wants believers to be sanctified. "God . . . desires that the status of holiness which he gives us through the redemptive work of Christ should be expressed in a quality of life reflecting his

character and will."2 Holiness in the present is an essential prerequisite for the glorious future God has planned for His holy people.

2. But sanctification is not automatic, as if God will do it apart from human cooperation and self-discipline. Believers must learn to control themselves• Those who allow God to sanctify them please Him and do His will. They stand blameless before Him. Those who reject His call to holiness put themselves in line for divine punishment• David Peterson presumes that sanctification is primarily another way of referring to "Christian conversion and incorporation into the community of believers•" He insists that "being cleansed from sin and set apart for God's service.., brings the obligation to reflect the holiness of God in every aspect of our lives."3 He considers it biblically inappropriate to refer to a moving experience of "renewal and rededication to the Lord and his service" as sanctification.4 Wesleyans would agree that conversion is a genuinely sanctifying divine work, but would add that, as initial sanctification, it is only the beginning. If lives of holiness were the inevitable result of Christian conversion, much of 1 Thessalonians would be unintelligible. Why was Paul concerned that genuinely converted believers might be lost? Why did he send Timothy on his mission to establish the Thessalonians in their faith? Why did he pray for their sanctification? Why did he exhort them to live lives of holiness? Apparently, human choices and commitments are essential conditions of God's ongoing sanctifying work in the lives of believers. To take such a view is not to espouse a "human-centered" view of "progress and growth," as Peterson seems to suggest.5

3. A single sanctifying moment will not suffice. Growth in sanctification entails an ongoing process. This requires the continued cooperation of believers, as the repeated exhortations "to do this" and "more and more" imply. Paul's prayer that God might sanctify these believers "entirely" (1 Thess. 5:23, NRSV) cannot be taken to suggest otherwise. Peterson correctly notes that "holiness means always starting afresh, acknowledging each day our status as God's holy people and living it out." But it also means "being shaped more and more by the totality of grace coming to us in Jesus Christ -- we are being 'glorified."6 But Peterson (I believe, mistakenly) concludes that Paul's reference to "entire sanctification" in verse 23 has in mind "the consummation of God's sanctifying work," that is, the Thessalonians' "glorification."7 The logic of the text contradicts his claim that "entire sanctification" is to be equated with "the moment when we see God face to face."8 The scriptural evidence supports the Wesleyans' distinction between sanctification that is initial, entire, and final.

4. The Lord is the Source of the continuing "increase and overflow" of love in the lives of sanctified believers. "Most commentators.., assume from the use of holiness terminology in 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3, 4, 7; 5:23 that a process of sanctification beyond conversion is in view here."9 This is the hallmark of the life of holiness: growth, maturing, and progress in the Christian life, particularly in "love." Ever increasing love is "the means" by which Christians are "established blameless in holiness before our God" at the very center of their beings.10 This "inner

strengthening of the heart in love . . . is the secret of true holiness. Blamelessness before God is closely linked with living in love, because love influences thinking, desires, motivation and behavior."11 "Love and holiness are two related ways to view the Christian life. Holiness will be preeminently expressed in love, and love will be the essential means by which holiness is maintained."12 Love is not to be confused with the "passionate lust" of pagans. In fact, Paul makes a special point of emphasizing that sanctification involves the disciplined exercise of one's sexuality.13 Clearly love is more than a feeling. To love others is to refuse to use them for selfish ends or to take advantage of them. On the contrary, it involves a commitment to live responsibly in relation to believers and unbelievers. Those who know they are unconditionally loved by God and who have committed their lives completely to Him no longer live for themselves alone or according to the values of this pagan world.

Paul proceeds from that theological assumption that the character of Christians is fundamentally different from that of pagans because of the character of their God. Pagans behave as they do because they "do not know God." Christian morality involves living "a life worthy of God, who calls you," not only "into his own kingdom and glory" in the future, but to "holiness" in the present (1 Thess. 4:5; 2:12; 4:7, RSV). Paul insists that the God who called Christians also made them worthy of His call and enabled them to fulfill their "every good resolve" (2 Thess. 1:11-12). "No-one can be 'blameless in holiness' without the love that God's Spirit inspires and enables."14

5. God's sanctifying activity affects the Christian's entire being15 -- one's "whole spirit, soul and body." It involves a "through and through" cleansing of every dimension of life (1 Thess. 5:23). Sanctification cannot be restricted to inner motives. It expresses itself in tangible outward behavior. It would seem to renovate both the character and conduct of believers. It begins in our hearts, but it must eventually emerge in what we do with our hands. It is not restricted to the religious aspects of human life; Paul emphasizes its counter-cultural transformation of the most secular realm of the ethical life -- the sexual behavior of believers. Peterson makes a special point of insisting that Paul's prayer for the "entire sanctification" of his readers in verse 23 "is not employed in the way that prominent holiness teachers have understood it."16 He stresses that "'entire sanctification' is not a crisis moment in the process of Christian maturation, as Wesley and others proposed."17 And that "sanctification here is not a second work of grace, though it clearly has a present and a future aspect."18 Most Holiness exponents would quibble with Peterson on these points -- he certainly does not prove these points but simply asserts them. But we can agree that Paul's prayer in verse 23 gathers up "the main pastoral exhortations of the preceding section (4:1-5:22),"19 which have to do primarily with "ethical norms and behavior."20 To admit that "Paul is praying in a summary and quite general way . . . for the complete expression in their lives together of what it means to be the holy people of God"21 is not to contradict the teaching of Holiness churches.

6. Sanctification is expected to be a reality in the lives of believers prior to Christ's return. The expression "at22 the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" should not be taken to suggest that sanctification comes as a result of the Second Advent or only in the article of death. After all, Paul prays that believers should be "kept blameless" in preparation for the end, not "made blameless" because of it.23 Peterson stresses that the "divine work" of entire sanctification "is associated with the return of Christ."24 Paul's prayer that the Thessalonians may be "preserved blameless" in 5:23 (KJV) "picks up the emphasis of the earlier part of the chapter." According to Peterson, verses 1-11 are Paul's exhortation for them to "live sober and godly lives, because 'the day of the Lord' is near." In verse 23 Paul prays that God will make that possible. But, contrary to Peterson, does this not suggest that Paul's prayer must be answered prior to the Second Coming? If entire sanctification is the prerequisite for glorification, not its equivalent, Paul must expect it in this world and not the world to come.

CONCLUSION

Although we are persuaded that the Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of sanctification coheres with an objective reading of I Thessalonians, honesty compels us to admit that other interpretations are possible. Wesleyans need not hesitate to refer to their distinguishing doctrine as "scriptural holiness." It rests on no one biblical book or proof text, but on the whole tenor of Scripture. Whatever else the message of "scriptural holiness" involves, it must include the challenge of 1 Thessalonians. God expects moral integrity of His people, because He has given His Holy Spirit to enable them to live exemplary, Christlike lives in this world as they prepare for the world to come.

The following chapters are grounded on a broad range of biblical texts. They do not claim to exhaust either the full Wesleyan message or all the Bible has to say on the subject of holiness. Their goal is much more modest. They are attempts from a self-consciously Wesleyan perspective to remind those sympathetic with this theological tradition of the practical implications of holiness in everyday life.

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03 -- THE HOLY LOVE OF GOD -- EZEK. 36:22-32

INTRODUCTION

Palm Sunday is the first of eight days traditionally called Holy Week. What a misnomer!

A noisy parade began it all, complete with donkeys, shouting children, and waving palm branches -- to many an open call for revolution. Then there was that nasty confrontation with the guardians of the Temple. Imagine the chaos of coins cascading from collapsed tables, skittish sheep scampering for safety, turtledoves

taking flight from toppled cages. You can be sure the Roman soldiers watching from their perch in the Fortress of Antonio were not amused. Nor were the priestly aristocrats. Perhaps their Pharisaic rivals were right about this troublemaker from Galilee.

Holy Week? More like a week of intrigue, as religious politicians struck a deal behind the scenes with one of Jesus' disciples!

Holy Week? More like a harried week full of hasty preparations for a private upper room to celebrate one last intimate Passover meal with friends. But the special meal turned bizarre as arrogant disciples refused to stoop to do the menial, but necessary, chore of washing dirty feet, leaving their Lord, clad only in a towel, to fulfill the despised task himself. Holy indeed!

Holy Week? Can't you hear the loud protests as disciples object to Jesus' warning, "One of you will betray me" (Matt. 26:21)?

"Oh, no! Not I! The others, maybe. But not I."

Holy Week? Can't you hear the tortured prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless . . ." (Matt. 26:39, KJV). Can't you hear the anguished sigh as Jesus discovered His disciples sleeping again when they were supposed to be praying?

And then came the Judas kiss, torches, Temple police, wildly swinging swords, and mass confusion. Broken promises, total desertion, oaths, and denials. Holy?

Holy Week? A kangaroo court complete with false witnesses? A mob rules as a spineless politician seeks to hold on to his job awhile longer in the face of plummeting popularity.

Mockery. A brutal beating. An ugly execution. Hasty burial. Disciples cowering for fear they might be the next one arrested. Bitter tears. Confused reassessments of three wasted years following another empty dream. One disciple voiced the disillusionment of most: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21, NRSV). Shattered hopes. Despair. Even a reported suicide.So you thought you had a bad week!

To understand this strange "Holy Week," let us turn to Ezek. 36.

PROBLEM

This text is an unnerving reminder that God's got a problem. And we're it.

That's right. God's most difficult problem is not the ungodly world out there. It's the Church. It's not the students and professors at secular universities. It's folks at so-called Christian colleges. It's not the people who spend Sunday mornings sleeping off their Saturday night parties. It's the people who populate the pews of Christian churches around the world Sunday after Sunday. It's not the students who invent lame excuses on their chapel reduction petitions and get by with it, or those who would rather pay chapel fines than attend. We're God's problem.

It's not that God would rather we'd sleep in on Sunday mornings or skip chapel with abandon. It's not that He would like to put Christian schools out of business. His problem is that His people have embarrassed and humiliated Him. We've ruined His reputation. We have profaned His holy name.

No. I'm not talking about profanity in the sense of swearing. The commandment forbidding us to take God's name in vain is not concerned primarily about cursing. Its concern is not just about how we talk but about how we walk.

We profess to be God's people. We call ourselves Christians, followers of Jesus Christ. We bear God's name, but when we fail to live like it, we embarrass Him. When we treat Him as ordinary, we profane His holy name.

How will the unbelieving world ever come to know that God exists if the Church lives as if He does not? How will the world ever learn that God longs to enter into a personal relationship with His creatures if we Christians take our relationship with Him so lightly?

The story is told about Alexander the Great's questioning of a young soldier who deserted in the heat of battle. When the deserter was brought for trial, the Macedonian conqueror asked him, "Soldier, what is your name?"

When the young soldier replied, "Alexander, my lord," Alexander the Great ordered the guard standing beside the deserter to strike him in the face.

Then he asked again, "Soldier, what is your name?" When the young deserter replied as before, the great general stood to his feet and issued the order, "Soldier, either change your name or change your behavior!"

If you have ever faced the very real danger of death, you can perhaps sympathize with the young deserter. The will to live is an incredibly strong drive. But if you've ever depended on the loyalty of others in a cause greater than your personal comfort, you'll probably agree that the young man got off easily. According to the laws of ancient warfare, he deserved to die.

But what's to become of those who desert the Lord of the universe? If a human king deals severely with one whose behavior soils his good name and besmirches his reputation, how should the King of Kings deal with His unworthy

subjects? If He gives Peter and those of us who are more like him than we ought to be what we deserve, we've got a serious problem.

The prophet Ezekiel moves from the problem to the solution. But first he makes clear that the problem is not what it appears at first glance.

From the disciples" perspective, the problem with Holy Week was that Jesus had turned out to be a big disappointment -- certainly not the kind of Messiah they'd hoped for. The problem from the perspective of the people of Israel in Ezekiel's day was that God had disappointed them. He was their problem. After all, they were captives in the land of Babylon. Their land had been destroyed. Their Temple lay in ruins. And they were feeling sorry for themselves. They'd lost hope. They thought that God had failed them. They imagined that He didn't care about them. They weren't even sure He existed.

That's the whole point of the story about Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones in chapter 37. In verses 11-14, God is speaking to the prophet Ezekiel:

"Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD" (RSV).

In the Middle East a nation's god was closely linked with the "nation's physical well-being: crops, flocks, health, peace .... In such a setting, . . . military defeat could only mean one of two things. Either the people had sinned and their god was judging them, or they had not sinned and their god was simply unable to care for them.

"In either case, such people were scorned and their god was open to ridicule."1
This is the message of Ezek. 36:17-21:

"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their doings. . . . So I poured out my wrath upon them for [their violence and idolatry] .... I scattered them among the nations... I judged them [by sending them into exile]. But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that men said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD ....' But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel caused to be profaned" (RSV).

What a tragedy! God's people do not know Him. Oh, they know who He is, but to know someone in the Hebrew sense involves more than collecting facts about another. To know God is not simply to have our theology straight. Knowledge in the biblical sense involves an intimate personal relationship. But it is more. To know God is not simply to have had a religious experience some time in the past. To know God is to continue to trust and obey Him. God's people clearly lacked this knowledge. They had not learned from the experience of His judgment to abandon their sinful ways. Their lives did not match their profession. They were practicing atheists.

If there is a God, to live as if there is not "is in an ultimate sense irrational and a disguised suicide."2 To know God as "the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 1:4) is to realize that His holiness consumes all that is unholy. To reject God is to call down His judgment on ourselves.3

PURPOSE

From God's perspective the problem is that His people have ruined His reputation. His purpose is to restore His good name. To do so He plans to return His exiled people to the Promised Land.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:22-23, RSV).

When we say the Lord's Prayer -- "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9, KJV) -- we are praying that God will vindicate His holiness, that He will prove himself to be God, that the Church and the world will know Him as the holy God He truly is.

Easter was not the crowning event of a wonderful week; it was the vindication of God in the face of human perversity. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus, Good Friday would have been Black Friday, followed by a succession of Miserable Mondays, and then numbing forgetfulness, and then eventually life as usual. Disciples would have returned to their nets and their tax collecting. And soon the memory of the lowly Nazarene would have faded away completely. But God vindicated His holiness!

When God acts in judgment or in mercy in the history of His people, it is for one purpose. Did you notice the phrase that sticks out like two sore thumbs on both ends of our text -- in verses 22 and 32? "It is not for your sake that I will act."

God's restoration of Israel is not primarily because He feels sorry for them. It is not because they deserve it. It is not even because they have repented of their sins. On the contrary, God expects that His gracious act of restoration will embarrass His people so that they will regret their behavior enough to repent.

We minimize the seriousness of our sin as an affront to God when we say simply, "I messed up!" And we miss the reality of repentance when we imagine it involves simply shedding a few tears at an altar rail whenever we please.

Repentance is not merely feeling sorrow that we have been caught in our sins or that our sins have caught up with us. Repentance is acknowledging that we have wronged a holy God. It is not only turning from our sinful ways but also refusing to repeat the same sin in the future should the opportunity present itself.

If this is so, I cannot simply decide to repent whenever the mood strikes me. Apart from God's grace intercepting me in my path to self-destruction and empowering me to live differently, I cannot and will never truly repent. So God says:

"It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel .... I [will] cleanse you ... I will cause [your] cities to be inhabited .... Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I [am] the LORD, [that I] have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it" (Ezek. 36:32-33, 36, RSV).

Like a broken record, this refrain rings out again and again in the prophecy of Ezekiel. On the pages of my open Bible it appears five times as I look down at my text:
36:11 -- "Then you shall know that I am the LORD."

36:23 -- "and the nations shall know that I am the LORD."

36:36 -- "Then the nations . . . shall know that I [am] the LORD."

36:38 -- "Then they shall know that I am the LORD."

37:6 -- "and you shall know that I am the LORD" (all NRSV).

You could turn to Ezek. 6:7, where the refrain appears for the first time. Sixty times in chapters 6 through 38 of Ezekiel, God assures the prophet that He is about to act so that His people will know that He is God -- that He is with them -- and so that the unbelieving world may come to know as well that He is God. We will never see our need for holiness until we come to see God as holy love.

Hear the words of Isa. 43:

"Thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. ... You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you .... Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." . . . You are my witnesses, says the LORD, . . . SO that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.... I am God, and also henceforth I am He .... I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. . . . Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing... [for] the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise .... I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (vv. 1-7, 10-11, 13, 15, 18-19, 21, 25, NRSV).

God is not anxious to abandon His covenant relationship with His rebellious people. On the contrary, Ezekiel assures us that, although God's people have not kept their promises and have forgotten their covenant with Him, He has not forgotten. He will remember His covenant so that His people will know that He is the Lord, so that they will remember and regret and repent and return to Him (16:59-63).

God's purpose is to change the entire world. But if the world is ever to come to know that there is a God, to know that He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to know that He is holy, those of us who claim to be His people must start taking His holiness seriously.

In Ezek. 34 God says, "I will make with them a covenant of peace.., so that they may live .... I will make them.., a blessing.., and they shall know that I am the LORD .... They shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they.., are my people" (vv. 25-27, 30, NRSV).

PLAN

God has a problem, and we're it. He has a purpose-that He may be known as who He truly is -- the Holy One, the Lord God. According to Ezekiel God's purpose is to restore His ruined reputation. And He had a plan for doing so.

"For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take

out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (36:24-27, RSV).

God does not give up on us easily. So far as Scripture indicates, we're His only plan for making himself known to the world. God's plan is not to reject His people, in spite of how we've treated Him.

On the contrary, His plan is to restore His reputation by reassembling His scattered people. He plans to remove us from our land of exile. He will regroup us -- forming us into a united people. And He will return us to the Promised Land. He will restore us, reclaim us, renew us. He will cleanse us from our sin and give us a fresh start. He will give us His Spirit to make obedience possible. He will reconstruct us. He will remove our stubborn hearts and replace them with hearts that will be responsive to Him. He will redirect our lives from rebellion to heartfelt obedience.

I suspect that God is nauseated by our so-called Christian bumper stickers. When we announce to the world, Be Patient with Me, God Is Not Finished with Me Yet, what we are saying is, in effect, "Hey, don't blame me if I don't live like a Christian. It's God's fault." When we excuse our shabby conduct with the cute clich6 I'm Not Perfect, Just Forgiven! we imply, "Don't expect much from God, or from the Christian faith -- or from me, for sure! I'm just the same as you are, only I've got a ticket to heaven, and you don't. So there!" Popular Christianity, which suggests that holy living is optional, must make God sick. It has certainly ruined His reputation.

PROMISE

God has a problem -- us. We have frustrated His plan that the world may come to know that He is God through us. Nevertheless, He has not abandoned His purpose. We deserve to be rejected as junk, but instead He promises to recycle us.

Too often we think of the Old Testament as a book of law. And it is that. But who can miss the grace in our passage? Although we deserve only to be punished for representing God so poorly, He promises to give us a second chance.

"You shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleannesses .... Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and... [embarrassed] for your ways, O house of Israel" (Ezek. 36:28-29, 31-32, NRSV).

Although we should be rejects -- unworthy representatives of God -- He promises to restore us to himself. He promises to give us the most intimate of relationships with Him -- "You will be my people, and I will be your God" (36:28). He

wants to release us from our sins. He will replenish our failed resources. He will rebuild our shattered lives, remove our reproach.

What a God! What grace! What love!

How embarrassing!

When we see ourselves from God's perspective, we quit our pity parties. We quit asking, why me? When we remember how we have failed God, we reassess our lives. In shame, we repent and return to the God who gives us not what we deserve but what we need.

CONCLUSION

You may have heard the story about the angry sergeant who struck a private in the face without any provocation. In response to this undeserved abuse the private promised, "Sir, I'll make you sorry for that if it's the last thing I ever do."

Later, in the heat of battle, the wrongly abused private saved this same officer's life. The puzzled sergeant extended his hand in friendship and asked, "Why would you risk your life to save mine, after the way I treated you?" The private gripped the officer's hand and said, "I told you, sir, that I would make you sorry for that if it was the last thing I ever did."4

How godly! How Christlike! How Christian!

Yes, God's got a problem. But it's not a quick temper. It's not injustice. We're it. We should be glad that God had a plan to let the world know the truth about Him, in spite of us! Let us rejoice that He had a purpose to fix us up so that we could still be His means of doing so. We celebrate that He promised to give us what we need, not what we deserve!

If we really understand these truths during the Lenten season, we will see the Cross in an entirely new light. Can you see? It was God's last-ditch effort to make us sorry for profaning His holy name, even if it was the last thing He ever did.

And Easter! It was God's vindication of His holiness! Jesus was right and His accusers wrong.

And so the next move is ours -- yours and mine. If we've been guilty of ruining God's reputation, what do we do now? Will we reach out and accept His forgiveness and cleansing? Or will we continue to humiliate Him and reject His holy love? His arms are still stretched out wide to receive us and give us a new beginning. It is only the beginning, but it is the prerequisite for pursuing the path of holiness.

A Charles Wesley hymn provides a fitting conclusion:

And can it be, that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off; my heart was free.
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.5

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04 -- IS HOLINESS CONTAGIOUS? -- MARK 6:53 7:8, 14-23; 8:34-38

INTRODUCTION

Birds of a feather flock together," so the old saying goes. "A person's character is known by the company he keeps." The evidence is incontestable. People take on the characteristics of those they often associate with. Married

couples -- or so it's claimed -- over time even begin to resemble each other. Speech patterns, colloquial expressions, slang even our words give us away. Recall how Peter's "country bumpkin" Galilean dialect gave him away at Jesus' trial (Matt. 26:73).

There's no denying the power of influence. Parents would never encourage their children to cultivate intimate friendships with bad kids. On the contrary, parents are delighted when their offspring seem to hit it off with kids from good church families. None of us would permit our teenagers to attend a party where we knew alcohol and drugs would be present. The presence of responsible adult chaperons is essential even for church outings.

There's no denying the power of influence. But influence is a two-way street. Bad people may influence good people to do evil. But good people may also influence bad people to do right. The question is, Which is more powerful? Soap or dirt? Good or evil? Holiness or uncleanness?

Most ancient people took for granted that the world was divided into three realms. On the one extreme was the world of the holy, inhabited by God and persons and things consecrated to Him; on the other, the world of the unclean. In between was the mundane world of everyday life. Both the sacred and the impure possessed an inherent "mysterious and frightening force." These two forces transformed everything with which they came in contact. The unclean and the holy were both considered untouchable. Those who touched them became themselves untouchable. Thus, for example, Old Testament laws prohibited touching impure things, such as corpses, and sacred things, such as the ark of the covenant (see Lev. 11 -- 16; Num. 6; 19; 31).1

Such regulations reminded Israel of the transcendent holiness of its God and of the holiness it was to preserve as His chosen people. They also assured that Israel remained separate from the pagan nations that surrounded it. Following the Babylonian Exile, preoccupation with ritual piety and the development of impractical prescriptions made most Jews despair of the possibility of personal holiness. They took for granted that uncleanness was contagious. Even casual physical contact with an "unclean" person would make them unclean.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF HOLINESS

Different groups of first-century Jews had different ways of responding to this predicament. Be forewarned that my characterizations of these groups are unavoidably over-simplistic, broad generalizations.

1. Sadducees assumed that social and political realities demanded compromise with the occupying power in order to maintain peaceful coexistence. Because they represented the elite of Jewish society, they had considerable to lose if d6tente failed. "Better Roman than ruined," they might have said. They chose the

path of secularization rather than that of sanctification. Holiness was relegated to holy days, in holy places, in the fulfillment of their holy office. But on every other day, in every other place the Sadducees assumed it was life as usual -- get "down and dirty"; meet the Romans on their turf on their terms.

2. On the opposite extreme were the Essenes, the Jewish sect believed to have produced and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls. They contended that evil was so strong and evil people so numerous that even normal social interaction was to be avoided. Everyday life in mainstream society unavoidably involved the risk of the fatal contagion of sin. Thus Essenes moved into remote, wilderness, monastic communities, miles from every known form of sin. Hard work, rigid discipline, constant study of Scripture, frequent prayers, and repeated ritual baths enabled them to sustain their hard-earned holiness from contamination by the world. They took quite literally the law of Moses ordering everyday life in their communities. Consider one example. The Community Rule of the Qumran Essenes dictated a rigid adherence to Deut. 23:12-14. In compliance with the biblical command, all members of the community were issued a trowel to prepare suitable toilets for themselves. Holiness for the Essenes required isolation from the world, a relegation of holiness to the margins of life. Holiness meant isolation -- not the sanctification of all of life.

3. In contrast to those who saw escape and separation as the only solutions, the Zealots took the route of active, often violent, opposition to evil in the world. The enemies of holiness that loomed largest in their minds were the Romans. Thus, Zealots refused to pay taxes because to do so was to aid and abet the occupying pagans, to concede Israel's enslavement to Rome. It would be an unconscionable betrayal of the one true God. The Zealots' politicization of holiness allowed them to justify even violent means in the pursuit of just ends, because they assumed that real holiness could not exist in a fallen world dominated by evil men.

4. Despite the modern image of the Pharisees as pedantic legalists, the Essenes considered them far too liberal for their tastes. And they were far too willing to compromise for the Zealots' tastes. The Pharisees, however, thought of themselves as simply realists in an extremist world. Unlike the Essenes, they recognized the need to adapt Old Testament regulations to the modern world of the first century. It was not enough simply to repeat woodenly laws that were given to maintain sanitation for people wandering in the wilderness. The Pharisees were not opposed to sanitary toilets, suitable for city dwellers. Similarly, to the dismay of the Zealots, as a necessary concession to existing realities, the Pharisees paid taxes. Grudgingly. Who doesn't? Unlike the Sadducees, they were no friends of Rome. They relished the day when Israel would once again enjoy autonomy. Unlike the Zealots, Pharisees were reluctant to take matters into their own hands. They awaited the coming of God's kingdom, when He would destroy His enemies and vindicate His faithful people.

In their passion for holiness, the Pharisees took it upon themselves to do more than the law required and less than it allowed. Though only laymen, they voluntarily accepted the law's purity regulations intended for priests serving in the Temple. Not only shewbread eaten in the Temple by priests but every meal was to be observed as holy unto the Lord. The Pharisees attempted to extend the boundaries of the holy priesthood to include all people. They expanded the regulations securing the sanctity of the holy Temple to include all places (see Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The Pharisees assumed, as did most of Jesus' contemporaries, that uncleanness was contagious and holiness threatening at best. The Pharisees were realists. They knew they could not perfectly observe all of their own regulations. Thus they developed and extended Old Testament teaching on the necessary means for cleansing themselves after even inadvertent contact with uncleanness (see Lev. 15). This normally took the form of a ritually prescribed procedure of hand washing -- twice, with specific amounts of water and hands held in appropriate positions. Most Pharisees lived near Jerusalem, so they could offer various sacrifices to atone for their contamination and to reestablish their tarnished holiness.

The Pharisees risked the contagion of life in the world and the inevitable contacts with wickedness with which it confronted them. Their so-called legalism was intended to preserve their fragile sanctity in this hostile environment. The Pharisees' 613 general and special rules were an attempt to "build a fence around the law." By observing these practical and specific guidelines for holy living, one could avoid even the hint of evil. By means of their protective fence, Pharisees even avoided deeds that were not wrong in and of themselves but that might lead to sinful actions. Thus, for example, they drew up a list of 39 activities forbidden on the Sabbath. One forbade women to look in a mirror on the Sabbath to avoid the possibility that-vain as women are -- they might see a gray hair, be tempted to "harvest" it, and so violate the commandment forbidding work on the day of rest.

Modern caricatures of all Pharisees as legalists and hypocrites are largely unfounded and unfair. Their concern to build a fence around the law was an honest expression of their commitment to live out the terms of Israel's covenant with God in the real world. They did not imagine that observing the law would save them. They knew that their relationship with God was founded on His grace alone. But they took obedience to this gracious God seriously. The Pharisees' approach to holiness might be called the path of privatization and ritualization. And wherever holiness is relegated to the realm of private piety and ritual, legalism finds a fertile field.

The fence-building ethic of the Pharisees has a modern analogy in the cautious drivers who set their cruise control at 50 miles per hour even when the posted speed is 55. They play it safe to avoid any risk of exceeding the speed limit.

But perhaps a better analogy might be found in the rationale for traditional Holiness Movement churches' opposition to social dancing. It is not that rhythmic movements of the body are wrong in and of themselves, but they might encourage illicit sex. Dancing is, as someone has said, "a vertical expression of a horizontal idea."

Many Christians once refused to patronize restaurants or grocery stores that sold alcohol, even when they had no intention of buying any themselves. Others boycott all motion picture theaters, regardless of the movie being shown, to avoid taking the slippery slope from Bambi to pornography. Others urge us to refuse to buy Proctor and Gamble products because of unsubstantiated rumors that this corporation supports satanism.

Allow me an aside for those who find all of this only so much silliness. Admittedly, our predecessors in the Holiness Movement, by focusing upon the rejection of such things as jewelry and cosmetics and seamless hosiery, "fastened upon distinctions that were essentially trivial." But as Elton Trueblood observed, "The mistake of such actions is not the mistake of being willing to be a conscious minority, but rather the mistake of arriving at distinctiveness too simply."2

In a day when non-Wesleyans are rediscovering the call of Scripture to ethical living, it is high time that contemporary Wesleyans, adrift in morally uncertain seas, reconsider the practical implications of the separational dimension of holiness.3 Clearly, our age is less "a friend to grace" (Watts) than was our forefathers'. Even if they were guilty of trivializing the call to separation, we must not be guilty of abandoning it. Far too many contemporary Holiness people, embarrassed by the legalisms of their past, wallow in the licentiousness of modern lawlessness. If they even profess to believe in holiness, they haven't a clue what difference it might make in their lives.

Our Holiness forebears were not all wrong. The biblical call to holiness does involve separation from the world, personal piety, and radical obedience to the will of God. And before we dismiss the Pharisees entirely, let us hear the words of Jesus (from Matt. 23:23): "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices -- mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law -- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." Before we lightly dismiss the Pharisees' -- or our theological parents' -- legalistic preoccupation with petty issues, we should ask ourselves, Are we more committed than the Pharisees to what Jesus called the "more important matters of the law -- justice, mercy and faithfulness"? Are we as willing as our forebears to be "a conscious minority" but for issues that really matter? If they demanded more than God or Scripture requires, do we imagine that we can get by with less?

The Pharisees sought to live in the world without being contaminated by it. This, you may recall, is very much like what Jesus prayed might be His disciples'

experience of sanctification (in John 17:14-19). But Jesus' focus was quite different from that of the Pharisees. His concern was not merely that Christians might find a private preserve from the evil of the world and protection from the evil one. His concern was that they might be "truly sanctified"-that they might be sent into the world just as Jesus himself had been sent into the world -- that the world might be led to believe by the contagion of their lives of holy love.4

Although the Pharisees were the largest of the four major Jewish sects, their numbers were comparatively small. Estimates are that they made up no more than 1 or 2 percent of the population of Palestine. Nevertheless, their influence on the minds of the masses was considerable. Their views were widely held, even if the vast majority of first-century Jews could not, or would not, take the time and trouble to observe scrupulous Pharisaic practices. As a result, most Jews accepted the Pharisees' assessment that the masses were hopeless sinners. Few first-century Jews ever seriously attempted to observe rabbinic provisions for the preservation and restoration of ritual holiness. The Pharisees in our text who did observe them seem unconcerned to do more than save themselves.

THE POWER OF HOLINESS

All this may explain why Jesus met such opposition. He insisted that the only uncleanness that might defile a person was moral uncleanness (Mark 7:17-22). He also assumed that ethical holiness was contagious. Though He was "the Holy One of God," His holiness threatened only evil, not the people who were its helpless victims.

Jesus' refusal to practice the customary hand washing before eating was not a rejection of basic hygiene but of the notion that He might have been "infected" by casual contact with sinful people. His Sabbath healings seem to have been deliberate affronts on popular sensibilities about holy days. Nothing urgent compelled Jesus to heal people who had suffered many years from their affliction (see Luke 13:10-17). What difference would waiting one more day have made? But Jesus insisted, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NRSV). It was appropriate to do good, to meet human need, even on the Sabbath day (see Matt. 12:9-14). A person's deeds, not the day of the week, made the day holy or mundane.

Jesus associated freely with sinful, unclean people. Most of His contemporary Jews believed that to eat with others was to accept them as friends, to accept them as they were, to condone their sin, to compromise, and so, to be contaminated. But Jesus accepted invitations to eat in the houses of known sinners, blatantly ignoring Jewish sensitivities. He fellowshipped with tax gatherers who, by virtue of their livelihood, had compromised with pagan Rome and so were unclean.5

Jesus flaunted social conventions that presumed uncleanness was more powerful than holiness (see Matt. 15:120). The Gospels tell us that He touched lepers, freeing them from their uncleanness (see Luke 5:12-16; 17:11-19). Unlike most Jewish males of His day, He accepted women -- even prostitutes and adulteresses -- as human beings (7:36 -- 8:3; John 8:1-11). Far from being contaminated, Jesus felt "virtue" (KJV) pass from Him when a woman suffering from a chronic menstrual disorder touched Him (Luke 8:43-48; 6:17-19). He took time to bless "worthless" children, to the dismay of even His disciples (18:15-17). He risked contact with those believed to be possessed by evil spirits, causing demons to flee when confronted by such powerful holiness (7:26-29). Jesus did not hesitate to put His hands on the sick -- despite the prevailing view of His time that their illness was caused by their sin. By touching them, He brought them healing and forgiveness (Mark 2:112; 6:53-56; John 9:1-3). He even touched the dead, and by doing so brought life (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41-42, 49-56; John 11). Furthermore, Jesus antagonized the religious folks in His crowd by making lost sinners, tax gatherers, even Samaritans "heroes" of His parables (Luke 10:25-37; 15:1-2; 18:914) and by commending the faith and practice of Gentiles and other outcasts as superior to that of self-righteous Jews (7:1-10; 11:37-54; 19:1-10).

Even though Jesus was correct in His view of holiness, He did risk one thing by ministering to the unclean -- His reputation. The Pharisees might have dismissed Jesus as just another one of the unclean masses, were it not for His remarkable reputation with the crowds as a credible religious teacher -- a holy man. It was not enough that He was careless in the observance of the proper distinction between clean and unclean, between the holy and the profane. He led others astray as well.

Little wonder that in the name of religion Jesus' enemies eventually sought to eliminate Him as a serious threat to their world-view. They justified their antagonism by describing Him as a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax gatherers and sinners (Luke 7:34). This description was more than the charge of guilt by association -- "Birds of a feather..." It was a declaration of war, an identification of Jesus as one deserving death (see Deut. 21:18-23). Jesus' attempt to cleanse the Temple of extraneous religious paraphernalia to make room for Gentile worshipers seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back (see Mark 11:15-18; 14:53-59). So it was the law and law-abiding "holy" men who finally brought Jesus to His death.

Jesus later urged His followers to take the Good News to people of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 14:15-24; Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts illustrates that His disciples, steeped in the traditions of Jewish exclusivism as they were, at first resisted the mission to the Gentiles. Even the gift of the exalted Christ, the Holy Spirit, did not immediately overcome their religious prejudices. It did not happen overnight, but eventually they came to understand and emulate Jesus' radical understanding of contagious holiness. Peter required a threefold vision to see that non-Jews were appropriate candidates for God's cleansing power (Acts 10). Other Jewish Christians, even the apostles, at first called him to task for engaging in such

risky business (11:1-18; 15). But even Peter was not always able to balance consistently his new insight and his old friends, as the apostle Paul had to remind him in a public confrontation (Gal. 2:11-21).

Perhaps it is time to clarify my strange use of the word "contagious." I do not mean to suggest by this term that holiness makes people sick or that you can "catch" holiness simply by spending time in the company of a holy person. But I am suggesting that holiness is more powerful than sin; in fact, it has the power to defeat sin on its own turf. I am suggesting that authentic holiness is at least as contagious as laughter, that holiness is attractive and winsome, that it transforms all it touches.

Confidence in the contagious power of holiness led the apostle Paul to urge spouses in mixed marriages not to seek divorce (1 Cor. 7:10-16). He was persuaded that the believing spouse would "sanctify" the unbelieving. He was persuaded that holiness was stronger than unbelief, sin, idolatry, and so on. A believer might lead his or her spouse and children to the faith.

Paul knew the power of the "sanctifying Spirit." But he also knew the power of conviction. "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (Rom. 14:14, NRSV).

THE POWER OF CONVICTION

Are we convinced of the contagious, cleansing power of holiness? Most of us probably consider ritual taboos such as those first-century Jews customarily avoided as reflections of primitive superstitions. Today we consider people who are preoccupied with meticulous cleansings after casual contact with sinners to be mentally ill.

But in many other ways our practice sometimes suggests that we have greater sympathies for the views of Jesus' opponents than for those of Jesus, Paul, and the Early Church. Are we really persuaded that God is stronger than Satan, the Holy One stronger than the evil one? that good is stronger than evil? that right is stronger than might? that grace is greater than our sin? that the Spirit is stronger than the flesh?

Do we really believe that holiness is contagious? Or are we so preoccupied with self-preservation that we fail to touch the lives of needy people? Do we avoid AIDS victims because personal survival takes precedence over Christlike service? Is our religious reputation more important than reality? Are we more concerned with how holy some people think we are than with being holy? Are we cleansed and empowered to serve in Jesus' name? If so, are we demonstrating our sanctification by self-giving service? Or are we storing up virtue for some future contingency?

If God is the Source of authentic holiness, are we not convinced that His supply is inexhaustible? Will we ever persuade unbelievers of the reality and cleansing power of Jesus Christ if we cower in a "holy huddle" somewhere? When will we break out and move to the "line of scrimmage" where the contest between the forces of good and evil takes place?

But how do we confront an unclean world with the conviction that holiness is contagious? How do we comfort the walking wounded with the optimism of grace? What will it take to persuade us of the certainty that a holy God can change this unholy planet through a holy people?

CHANGED HEARTS

Nothing short of the inside-out transformation we call entire sanctification will enable God's people to serve Him and lead the world to know that He is God. Jesus quotes the words of Isaiah (29:13): "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men" (Mark 7:6-7). Ezekiel made a similar point: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (36:26-27, NRSV).

The temptation to which the Pharisees yielded is a common one among religious folks. It is to fulfill only the "laws" directed toward formal worship. But God's concerns go beyond the interruptions in our daily routine to worship. His concerns go beyond faithful attendance at church services. Worship involves more than praise in words or worship only in the sanctuary.

God's demand on us extends to the supposedly secular as well as the sacred dimensions of life. God longs to guide every day of our lives, not simply our special days. "Either the whole of Christian life is worship, and the gatherings and sacramental acts of the community provide equipment and instruction for this, or these gatherings and acts lead in fact to absurdity."6 True worship not only consists of what is practiced at sacred sites, at sacred times, and with sacred acts but also is the offering of ourselves as living sacrifices in our day-to-day existence in the world (Rom. 12:1-2).7 To talk about worship in this broad biblical sense requires attention to personal and social ethics as much as to corporate and private spiritual disciplines.

True worship, as the believer's wholehearted response to God, takes place primarily in the world and especially takes the form of service to our brothers and sisters. God wants practical, everyday religion: religion that helps the helpless and empowers the powerless (James 1:27; Matt. 25:31-46); religion that puts fine talk about love into action (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18). Ritual can never replace doing right. Just seeking God is no substitute for seeking justice in the street

(Amos 5:21-24). Worship and prayer are not means of bribing God to give us security or emotional release.

Sacrificial offerings, worship services, and private devotions are meaningful only in the context of lives of wholehearted obedience (see 2 Sam. 24:24; Jer. 7:21-26; 14:12; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8). The problem with the Pharisees in our text was not merely their quarrel with Jesus over the doctrine of holiness. It was a lack of practical trust in and obedience to God. It was using religion as a blank check to excuse wrongdoing. Jesus was not opposed to the Pharisees' regular public religious gatherings. The Gospels suggest that He regularly attended the synagogue. He certainly did not discourage their practice of private prayer or their study of the sacred Scriptures. But worship apart from obedience is meaningless. In our religious observances, have we lost the reality of true worship? Do our lips sing God's praises while our lives march to the world's beat? No one would ever accuse us of legalism. But are we satisfied with empty worship?

Isa. 58 is perhaps the Bible's most vigorous attack on empty worship. It is an answer to the complaint of God's people that He has not properly rewarded their feverish religious activity. Let's read His response to their complaint in verses 6-10:

"Is not this the kind of [worship] I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter -- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, . . . and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."

Then the nations will know that Yahweh is God. Then the unbelieving world will "see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, NRSV). Such Christlike holiness is contagious!

SANCTIFICATION IN A SECULAR AGE

But most of us have settled for a holiness that is more Sadducee-like, or Essene-like, or Zealot-like, or Pharisee-like than Christlike. The fact that we are here, not in a wilderness commune, suggests that isolation is not a serious threat. The infrequency of our observance of the sacraments suggests we are in little danger of falling victim to the ritualization of holiness. In another setting it might be useful to address the problem of the politicization that would equate holiness with right-wing Republican politics. But I would like to address the more serious threats presented by the insidious twins: secularization and privatization.

Functional secularism has crept into many Holiness churches. We seem to be afflicted by a tendency to sort out our lives into neat, airtight compartments. Our religious faith fits into one pigeonhole, while the rest of our lives is sorted out into various other compartments. The clear evidence of this is the narrow moral agenda evidenced by so many of our people and by the limited spiritual resources we seem to have for expanding the agenda we possess. We have defined holiness almost exclusively in negative terms -- by what we do not do. The only positive evidences of holiness we stress concern matters of private, personal piety -- prayer, devotions, church attendance, and so on; and with our secret inner attitudes -- generally thought of as some undefined warm, fuzzy feeling we call love.

We have conceded to the nonbiblical world-view that there are some areas of life that are not God's concerns, that there are sacred and secular realms of life. Jesus rejected the notion that any area of life was outside the sovereignty of God. But we have privatized holiness so that Christians have increasingly lost influence in the political, economic, scientific, and moral spheres of human life. We have relegated holiness to our private inner lives. Wholesome intentions matter more than holy living.

We must not neglect the spiritual resources of private piety, but neither should we imagine that we can hoard holiness like some stockpile of religious revenue. Most of us live in close proximity with other people -- in dormitories, in families, at church, on the job, in a neighborhood. Does our faith make a difference in the social dimensions of life? John Wesley insisted, "'Holy solitaries' is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."8 Those of us whose only claim to holiness is what we don't do are no better off than the church pews. What on earth are we doing for heaven's sake?

Lives of authentic holiness lived in the world and for the world are the most appropriate expressions of our worship to God because they witness to the world of His reality. Sanctification that operates within the supposedly sacred spheres of life is not entire enough. Too many of us have imagined that the word "entire," in our precious doctrine of entire sanctification, implies that when we "get it," God's finished with us. We can coast into heaven. Not on your life!

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05 -- SPIRIT-EMPOWERED SELF-EXAMINATION -- GAL. 5:25 6:5

INTRODUCTION

Let's imagine it's examination time. You can assume the roles of both examiner and examinee. What I have in mind is not so simple as the final exam for Biblical Literature 101. This is Christian Life 525 through 605.

Those who don't profess to be Christians need not bother taking this exam. You need to sign up for the course before you can take the final. This test is for those who claim to be Christians, in particular, Spirit-filled Christians. Are you ready? Let's see how you measure up.

Oh, yes. One more thing. As you know, before we take a test, it's always wise to reread our text. And here it is: Gal. 5:25--6:5:

"Since the Spirit is the Source of our life, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, so that we irritate some people and make others envious.

"Friends, if you catch a fellow Christian in a sin, you who are truly spiritual should restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. Look out for yourself, or you may be tempted to give in to spiritual pride. But if you bear one another's burdens, you will fulfill Christ's law. For if we think we are something, when we are actually nothing, we only fool ourselves. So we must all examine ourselves. Then we can take legitimate pride, based on our own accomplishments, not on comparisons with others. For we must all carry our own load" (author's translation).

Paul's goal in our text is to encourage "self-examination and self-criticism, in order to keep the level of ethical awareness high."1 But self-reflection alone is not enough. We "must be enabled by the [Holy] Spirit 'to do good.'"2 According to Gal. 5:25, the one essential requirement for Christian living is Spirit-empowered self-examination.

The principle upon which the Spirit-filled life is based is simple: keep in step with the Spirit; live a life of perfect obedience to God. Thanks to the Spirit's work in our lives, this is possible, and so it is expected. But the problem is that Christians sometimes sin. What then? Paul recommends a prescription and yet warns of its potential to be more perilous than the problem. It is here that he gets to the point of the entire passage. It is to get his readers to turn their gaze from the failures of others to themselves. The purpose of this passage is to spell out the practical, personal implications of the Spirit-filled life.

THE PRINCIPLE: PRACTICAL POSSIBILITIES

The Holy Spirit is the Source of the Christian's life. Apart from His work in our lives, we are hopeless, helpless sinners. We live on our own, from our own pitifully inadequate resources. And we live for meaningless, worthless ends. Our existence -- for it cannot truly be called life -- is marked by the works of the flesh. Paul describes this doomed existence in Gal. 5:19-21. "The works of the flesh" (KJV) are shamelessly "obvious," at times even within the Christian community. They include "hatred, discord, jealousy, [anger, NRSV], selfish ambition, [divisions, NCV],

factions and envy." We need to recall Paul's warning that "those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God," even if we call ourselves Christians.

This need not be. For where the Spirit rules in our lives and relationships, the results are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (vv. 22-23). Our text makes it crystal clear that even those who enjoy the justifying and sanctifying resources of the Spirit may not take them for granted. God's activity in our lives is neither magic nor automatic. It is personal and relational.

Obviously, "the fruit of the Spirit" cannot evidence itself in the lives of those who refuse to live under His sovereignty, who live solely on the basis of human resources, that is, under the tyrannical rule of the flesh. But neither does the Spirit's fruit grow and flourish in the "gardens" of Spirit-filled Christians who do not cultivate it. This explains Paul's appeal in Gal. 5:25, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

The expression "keep in step" or "fall in line" is a military term. It is a not very subtle reminder of the self-discipline that is required to live the Spirit-filled life. The Spirit will lead if we but heed. He will guide only as we follow. Although self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, it is available only to those who practice it.

It's a fact -- the Spirit is the Source of the Christian's existence. But the implications of this fact are that we must choose to live like it. The first part of Gal. 5 summarizes salvation. We move in our text to the implications that arise from it. Since God has given us life, this is what we must do with it.

Let's rehearse the first part of Gal. 5:

"For freedom . . . Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.... You... were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the [flesh, KJV]; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the [flesh] .... If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law .... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the [flesh] with its passions and desires" (vv. 1, 13-16, 18, 22-24).3

THE PROBLEM: PROFESSION AND PRETENSE

In Gal. 5:26 Paul reminds us that "failure to 'follow the Spirit' results in empty pretentiousness" -- groundless conceit.4 We profess to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, but we are out of step with the Spirit. We live in forgetfulness that everything

we are and possess we have as a gift from God. We are not great, just greatly blessed3 When we call Him Lord but still call the shots, we are frauds, braggarts, hypocrites, impostors. And by our pretending, we provoke others. Interpersonal hostilities are inevitable. At worst we turn against one another; at best we turn away from one another. Envy rears its ugly head? Life together becomes the exact opposite of the love and mutual service the Spirit intends. Self-love leads eventually to the disintegration of authentic community.7 Sadly, I've seen it happen in Christian churches and even in Holiness institutions of higher education.

So what are we to do when a Christian does not live like one? How do those who keep in step with the Spirit deal with the problem of sin in our midst? Gal. 6:1 advises, "If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently."

To say that "someone is caught in a sin" suggests that Paul does not consider routine transgression to be the norm. Here is a Christian brother or sister "detected, overtaken, surprised"8 in an unintentional wrong.9 Caught red-handed, in the act, so to speak. What is striking is that "Paul does not seem overly concerned with the offense itself but his concern is more with the possibility that the handling of such a case might become a source of evil for those who administer it."10 The apostle knew that God's grace was more than competent to cure the wrongdoer. His concern was with the would-be physicians. Jonathan Edwards, a famous early American preacher, is best remembered for his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Paul's concern is for sinners in the hands of spiritual people. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently."

THE PRESCRIPTION: PROCEDURES AND PURPOSES

The procedure Paul prescribes is to treat the case in a manner that befits spiritual people and that befits the condition of the fallen brother or sister. The sinner is to be restored, not punished -- cured, not condemned. Moral failure calls for restoration, not condemnation, not humiliation, not even commiseration. The word "restore" is the same one used in the Gospels to refer to the process of mending torn nets, putting them back in working order. Likewise, the restoration of fallen Christians is to fit them again for lives of useful service to God and others (see Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19, KJV).

The discipline that Paul calls for is of the spiritual person, not of the sinner. "Watch yourself"! Keep a critical eye on yourself; be compassionate to others. The transgressor is to be treated with remarkable leniency and tolerance. The faithful are to focus their critical powers on themselves, not on the flops. The Spirit will enable them to be gentle and not gloat. The fallen Christian is to be brought back to the right path in a manner that reflects God's grace.

The contradiction between the ideal and reality in the church brings with it the temptation to self-righteousness and arrogance. The prescription for the problem of transgression may itself prove to be a threat to the community, an opportunity for works of the flesh. "Paul seems keenly aware that a self-righteous posture of prosecutors can cause greater damage to the community than the offense done by a wrongdoer."11 There is no sin so subtle as self-righteousness. And there is no pride so destructive as spiritual pride.

Thus Paul urges us, "Carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). To carry or "bear" (KJV) another's burdens is not merely to tolerate them but actively to assist and relieve them. When we share others' burdens and misfortunes, we do more than sympathize; we support them in their daily struggles22 We share their problems and help them cope with them. When we enter into the lives of others -- walk a few miles in their shoes, so to speak -- it becomes more difficult for us to condemn them. To realize, "There but for the grace of God go I,"13 is not to condone another's sin. It is to resist the temptation to self-righteousness.

During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive barrier. The leader of the squadron was barking orders about a huge timber his men were trying to lift to the top of the barricade.

The man in civilian clothes stopped his horse and asked the leader of the group why he did not step up and give them some assistance. Astonished, the leader turned to the stranger and with the pomp of an emperor replied, "Why, sir, I am a corporal!"

Upon hearing this, the man apologized, dismounted, and flung the bridle over a post. He helped the exhausted soldiers lift the timber till the sweat stood in drops on his forehead. Once the job was done, he turned to the corporal and said, "Mr. Corporal next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, send for your commander in chief, and I will come and help you again." The out-of-uniform man was none other than Gen. George Washington.14

How can we conceited Christian corporals consider it beneath our dignity to stoop to lift a fallen comrade when our Commander in Chief carried the sins of the world to the Cross? To bear one another's burdens is to refuse to distance ourselves from the obvious needs that surround us.

But more than this, it is to fulfill Christ's Golden Rule -- to do unto others as you would have them do unto you (see Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31). It is to fulfill the second half of what He called the great commandment -- to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27). This fulfillment is not a condition but a result of salvation. According to Gal. 5:14, to fulfill the love command is to fulfill the whole law. And since, according to 2:20, it is Christ's love that secures our salvation, the law of love may be called Christ's law.15 By bearing one another's burdens, we "will fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2).

We should notice that Paul does not say here the strong are to carry the burdens of the weak. We all have burdens, no matter how spiritual we may be. And we all can help others carry their burdens, no matter how weak we may be. In fact, Paul seems to contradict himself in verse 5 when he insists, "Each one should carry his own load." Surely loads and burdens are much the same -- the daily struggles of life with its unavoidable pressures and problems. But there is no real contradiction, for "'sharing the burdens of life' does not eliminate the fact that everybody must learn how to live with himself."16

THE POINT: PRIDE AND PRAISE

To live with ourselves begins with knowing ourselves. This calls for an extraordinary measure of honesty. It is remarkable how capable we are of self-deception. Today Christian leaders urge us to love ourselves and to develop high self-esteem. Paul's advice seems so out-of-date: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (v. 3). But is he correct?

It's remarkable how students, supposedly suffering with low self-esteem, manage to accept full responsibility for their successes and nearly none for their failures. "The test was too hard"; "It was unfair"; "Others cheated"; "My high school teachers prepared me poorly." Grade inflation only reinforces the illusion. In most colleges, C is only officially the average grade. In practice, B is average. During the past 20 years average scores on college entrance exams have steadily dropped. Yet during this same period the percentage of students taking these exams with an A or B average has increased by more than 50 percent.17 Half my students seem to imagine they are in the top 10 percent of their class. Most students, in spite of their scores on college entrance exams, manage to rate themselves as better than average.

A decade ago a college board surveyed high school seniors" self-assessments in comparison with their peers.18 Some 60 percent considered themselves above average athletes; only 6 percent, below average. Even 70 percent ranked themselves as above average in leadership skills; 2 percent, below. In their ability to get along with others, 25 percent rated themselves in the top I percent, 60 percent in the top 10 percent; only I percent, below average. I wonder how they ranked themselves on math skills. "How do I love me? Let me count the ways" (to parody Elizabeth Barrett Browning).

The good news of the gospel is not that we have been set free by Christ to love ourselves, but that we have been set free from self-obsession. Sooner or later, we must learn, usually the hard way, to swallow our pride, acknowledge our humanity, and declare our utter dependence on God. There is a tremendous sense of relief that comes in discovering that the security and acceptance we were struggling to earn (or fake) has been given to us freely by the One whose love and

acceptance matter most! To know that I am nothing and that God loves me unconditionally only increases the wonder.

"There is nothing wrong with being 'nothing' or a 'nobody.'" For apart from God's grace, that is what we actually are. It is wrong to be deluded into thinking we are "somebody. .... Human beings must learn to accept that they really are "nothing.'" Applied to Paul's first readers, this was perhaps a warning that if they thought they were "spiritual" when they were not, they were "caught up in a dangerous and preposterous illusion."19 I leave it to your imagination what the apostle might say to those Holiness folk who profess to be entirely sanctified, but whose lives and relationships seem to reveal nothing of the character of Christ. I am not qualified to be their judge.

"Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else" (Gal. 6:4). Just as surely as Christian self-examination does not permit us to condemn others, it denies us the right to grade ourselves on the curve. "The most widespread illusions occur because of comparison of [ourselves] with others. In playing this game, [we] can manipulate things at will so that the comparison always turns out in [our] favor . . . and to the disadvantage of the person with whom" we compare ourselves.20 Why do we seem to take special satisfaction in seeing extraordinarily successful people cut down to size? Do we imagine that we grow taller because another is brought to his knees?

There is nothing wrong with achievement. But "a 'true' achievement is one which exists only.., with reference to [ourselves] . . . not as a result of comparing [ourselves] with others."21 Paul refused to defend himself when he was compared unfavorably with other supposedly "super-apostles." He wrote, "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12). "I am not in the least inferior to the 'superapostles,' even though I am nothing" (12:11). "I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect" (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

There is nothing wrong with taking pride in our achievements. But if we understand our achievements correctly, Christian boasting becomes a form of worship. As Paul said in Gal. 6:14, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Proper boasting praises God for His achievements in and through and in spite of me.

And there is nothing wrong with "self-sufficiency." After all, "each one should carry his own load" (v. 5). Over the last decade or so of my life, I have been trying to live what I have learned from the apostle Paul about "the secret of contentment." He concludes Philippians with these words: "I have learned to be content whatever the

circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (4:11-13).

There's great joy in taking life as it is and making the most of it. I'm learning not to waste emotional energy fretting about things I cannot change. There are some situations and some people that I'll never change, so I've given up trying. The only person I can ever hope to change is standing in my shoes. No one can steal my joy; but I can choose to squander it, or I can refuse.

CONCLUSION

May I recommend to you the path to peace and joy found by keeping in step with the Spirit?

The first step is to abdicate the throne of the universe. It may come to you as a surprise that God already occupies that place, and He's not about to let a pip-squeak like you have it anyway. He doesn't need my help ruling the world. And He can help me only as I acknowledge His right to reign in me.

The second step is to accept your incompetence as judge of the world. I understand that God has that position sewn up as well. Our task is to bear and share and care when others fall. It is not to condemn. It is not to exalt ourselves at their expense. I am called upon to examine only one person -- myself. I am not enhanced by your failure or diminished by your success. I do not answer to you, and you do not answer to me. God alone is our Judge, and He sets the terms by which each of us is to examine himself or herself. God's meter alone matters. We march to the beat of a different drummer.

The third step is to admit that, regardless of the state of grace you profess, you are nothing apart from God's grace in your life. Our greatest joy is to be found in a life that brings praise to Him. God's notice alone matters. I do not seek your praise nor fear your criticism. I await His words, "Well done, good and faithful servant;.., enter... into the joy of [your] lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23, KJV)! This is the one examination where the results ultimately matter.

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load .... Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God" (Gal. 5:25 -- 6:5, 16).

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06 -- HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE? PHIL. 1:9-11

In the opening verses of Philippians, Paul writes of his confidence that the God who "began a good work" among them "will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6, NRSV). Unlike some of his churches, the Philippians are not Paul's problems but his partners (v. 5; 4:15). They are not his field but his force. They are not helpless sinners but mature saints (1:1; 3:15) -- they belong completely to God. In fact, if these Macedonian Christians had any problem, it may have been the tendency of some among them to imagine that because of their spiritual prowess, they had arrived. At least Paul makes a special point of stressing his own need for progress in chapter 3: "I want to know Christ fully and become completely like him .... I have not already achieved this, nor have I already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (vv. 10, 12, author's paraphrase). He recounts his decision to put his personal successes behind him in a single-minded pursuit of one goal"the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 4b-14, RSV), and he urges the Philippians to do the same (v. 15).

Paul's prayer in 1:9-11 is not for unbelievers; it is not for floundering failures; it is not for backsliding believers -- but for exemplary, mature Christians who need to be reminded that no matter how far they've come in their Christian walk, they've not yet reached the goal. The experiences of conversion and sanctification may be behind them, but the resurrection is still ahead -- and their final salvation is contingent on continued faithfulness to Christ until the end (see 3:11).

And so Paul prays for the Philippians: May "your love . . . abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:9-11, RSV).

If you profess to be a Christian -- if God by His Spirit has made you a new creature in Christ Jesus -- and if you enjoy the experience of entire sanctification, Paul's prayer is for you. If his prayer is for you, I'd like to ask you a very personal question -- "How's your love life?"

No, I'm not talking about what some of you are thinking about. That's not the kind of love Paul was praying about -- but since I've got your attention, I'd like you to consider with me for a few minutes Paul's prayer requests concerning the Philippian Christians' love life. He prays that their love might be (1) developing, (2) discriminating, and (3) demonstrating.

DEVELOPING LOVE

Paul does not find it necessary at this point to define what he means by the word "love." Its meaning will be fully illustrated soon enough. In chapter 2, he appeals to the Philippians to adopt the example of love demonstrated by Jesus Christ, who, though He was in the form of God, emptied himself, assumed human form, and became obedient, even to the point of death on a cross• But even before this description, the Philippians, who had heard Paul preach, must have known how central love was to his gospel.

In fact, it is striking how little truly novel moral instruction you find in Paul's letters. There are clear parallels to most of what he has to say in the teaching of contemporary Jewish rabbis and Stoic philosophers. That is, apart from Paul's remarkable preoccupation with love. The centrality of love in Paul's thought is obvious in all his letters.

In Galatians, for example, he insists that the Christian faith expresses itself in love (5:6); that the whole law is fulfilled in one word -- love (v. 14); that the fruit of the Spirit is first and foremost love (v. 22).

Or consider Paul's prayer for his other Macedonian church, the Thessalonians -- a prayer in many ways similar to this prayer for the Philippians. In 1 Thessalonians Paul prays: "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.., so that he may strengthen your hearts in holiness and so that you may be blameless before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (3:12-13, author's paraphrase, cf. NRSV). Then Paul adds: "No one needs to write to you about love; for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all your fellow believers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more" (4:9-10, author's paraphrase, cf. NRSV).

In Colossians, addressing Christians he had never met personally (see 1:3-9), Paul writes: "You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity" (3:12-14, TEV).

If time permitted, we could consider at length Paul's hymn in praise of Christian love in 1 Cor. 13. Here Paul's prose soars with the eagles as he writes to a church populated almost entirely with turkeys. In the response to the Corinthians' arrogance, Paul insists: Apart from love, no spiritual gift, no heroic deed, nothing else is of any consequence. Enduring love alone makes life bearable. Our faith will one day give way to sight. Then our hope will become reality. But love will last forever. So, "Make love your aim" (14:1, RSV).

But let us return to Paul's prayer for the Philippians. His prayer, first of all, is that their love may develop. His language permits no suggestion that their love is deficient. He clearly implies that they already love. His prayer is not that they should start to love but that their love should keep growing still more and more until it surpasses all measurement. Paul does not say what or who it is they are to love just yet. He does not specify that they should love him more or one another more or God more. He simply prays that their love should develop.

DISCRIMINATING LOVE

Notice that Paul's prayer for a developing love is not a request that their love should increase in quantity, but that it should improve in its quality. "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent" (1:9-10, RSV). What Paul hopes for is not an increased intensity in their love lives; he does not pray for a greater emotional or religious fervency in their love. It is not a more intense but a more intelligent love that he seeks. His prayer is that their love may develop in such a way that it will be marked by Christian discernment and healthy discrimination.

In our concern to be politically correct, we need to remind ourselves that not all discrimination is bad. It is one thing "to make a difference in treatment or favor" based on prejudice, not persons.1 Paul insists that the coming of Christ has made distinctions based on ethnicity, gender, or social class inconsequential. To discriminate in this negative sense is entirely alien to Christian love. But it is essential that Christians learn to discriminate in the positive sense of recognizing differences that are consequential-between truth and error, between justice and injustice, between right and wrong, between good and bad, and between better and best.

Paul's concern is not simply that the Philippians should love, but with how they love and with what they love. It is the very same word for "love" Paul uses when he urges, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14), and that he uses when he grieves, "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me" (2 Tim. 4:10, NRSV). Misguided love, no matter how intense, is not a virtue. Mature Christian love is ethically sensitive and spiritually discerning.

ETHICALLY SENSITIVE

In Paul's concern for discriminating love, he prays first that the Philippians' love might grow in "knowledge." Paul consistently uses this word to refer not to mere intellectual awareness but to ethical sensitivity. By this knowledge he means that they should become increasingly familiar with the will of God -- that they should know what He wants of them and why, and that they should learn that His will for them is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom. 12:2). There is nothing to be said for mindless obedience to an externally imposed list of rules that make no sense at all. God longs for us to become mature Christians, who are internally

motivated to do what is right, regardless of the consequences, regardless of who's watching. This is the test of our Christian character.

Regardless of the Consequences. Paul reminds the Philippians that God has given us "the privilege for Christ's sake not only of believing in him but of suffering for him as well" (1:29, NJB). Are Philippians the only Christians who need to learn that practicing God's kind of love may involve a cross? Now as in Paul's day, there are professing Christians whose craving for comfort and security make them "behave like the enemies of Christ's cross" (3:18, NJB). But as Paul reminds the Philippians: "Their future is eternal loss, for their god is their appetite: they are proud of what they should be ashamed of; and all they think about is this life here on earth" (v. 19, TLB).

Regardless of Who's Watching. Are Philippians the only Christians who need to learn that "obedience must not be limited to times when" apostles are present (2:12, NJB)? It is in Paul's absence that he urges them to allow their salvation to express itself visibly and reverently. This is not self-salvation, for "it is God who, for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act" (vv. 12-13, NJB).

Christian Character. Ethical sensitivity only begins when God transforms and renews our minds as we offer ourselves fully to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). "The indispensable motivating inclinations behind all human action" are the integration of reason and emotion in the formation of what we call "character' -- life responses that reflect "habituated dispositions."2

Christian character arises from the conviction that God loves us unreservedly and unconditionally. John Wesley wrote: "From the true love of God and [humankind] directly flows every Christian grace, every holy and happy [attitude]; and from these springs uniform holiness" in all of our human relationships.3 Holy actions flow from holy attitudes cultivated "from disciplined practice." Intelligent love is no more magic or automatic than is the ability to play a Bach concerto. Entire sanctification gives us the "capacity to enact (or refuse to enact!) our desires and inclinations."4 We may know what we should love, but that is of little help if we do not choose to do it.

An informed Christian love is a matter of the head before it can be a matter of the heart. It is not a warm, fuzzy feeling but the will to do God's will above all else. It is an intellectual decision to pursue the good and reject the evil as it affects the other. In Romans Paul writes: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (12:9-10).

SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING

The discriminating love Paul prays for is characterized, first, by "knowledge" in the sense of ethical sensitivity. Second, it is marked by "all discernment" (Phil. 1:9, RSV), or "every kind of spiritual insight" (author's paraphrase). Paul prays that the Philippians may know not only what to love but also how that knowledge is to be put into action in real-life situations. He does not pray simply that they will become experts in ethical theory -- knowing "this is good" and "that is bad." Discernment requires the moral experience that puts theory into practice. It is not enough to want to do right or to know what is right and wrong. We need to develop the "spiritual sense" to know how to apply moral judgments in the making of truly Christian decisions? Here's the rub -- knowing how best to express Christian love.

Thus Paul prays that the Philippians' love may become increasingly discriminating so that they "may approve what is excellent" (v. 10, RSV), or, as another translation has it, so that they may approve "the things that really matter"6 -- the things that are inherently valuable. Paul prays that the ethical choices they make will not grow out of blind obedience but will arise naturally from their transformed Christian character and their allegiance to Christian ethical values. It doesn't take a course in logic to recognize that if there are some things that really matter, there are other things that really don't matter. That's a no-brainer. The problem is sorting out which are which.

Paul knows well that Christian values are often diametrically opposed to the values of the world. He writes in 2:15 that the Philippians live in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation" (RSV). And so do we. Even nonChristians recognize flagrant sin when they see it. As Paul tells the Galatians: "The works of the flesh are obvious" (5:19, NRSV).

But sometimes the Church and the world share common values. Paul urges the Philippians: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things" (4:8). But this is not a list of uniquely Christian values. In fact, it seems to represent the best of the virtues urged by pagan moral philosophers of Paul's day. Paul seems to suggest that there "was much in heathen views that might and ought to be valued and retained by Christians."7 The Christian ethic cannot be defined so simply as the antithesis of worldly values.

Christians must resist the temptation of extremism. It is too easy to blend into our culture like chameleons or to stick out like sore thumbs. Paul's hope for the Philippians was that they would take neither of these extremes.

We must likewise resist the temptation of negativism. In our concern to be right and to do right, we may find ourselves sidetracked by "complaining or arguing" (Phil. 2:14). Instead, Paul urges the Philippians: "You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of people who are crooked and

stubborn. Shine out among them like beacon lights, holding out to them the Word of Life" (vv. 15-16, TLB).

Consistently choosing the things that really matter in a world with distorted values will inevitably result in conflict and suffering -- whether physical or psychological. Christians do not have to seek out suffering like masochists. Paul does not call for us to be so obnoxious that we become deserving objects of persecution. On the contrary, he urges us to live so that we "may command the respect of outsiders" (1 Thess. 4:12, RSV). And yet, it is far too easy in the pursuit of respectability to be more concerned with what people think than with what God thinks. Whoever said it would be easy living like a Christian?

DEMONSTRATING LOVE

Paul prays that the Philippians may approve the things that really matter. The word "approve" has a twofold sense. It means both to approve and to prove -- to discover what really matters and "just do it." Thus Paul prays that the Philippians' love not only should develop and discriminate but also should be demonstrated. Our inner character is proven by our outward conduct. Love cannot remain merely a lofty ideal. It must move from our heads to our hearts to our hands. "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:9-11, RSV).

Paul's prayer concentrates on two specific kinds of fruit that Christ would produce in the lives of the Philippians -- that they should be "pure" and "blameless." To be "pure" suggests that their lives should be marked by honesty, transparency, genuineness, authenticity, integrity. In fact, the word translated "pure" here is a compound of two words meaning "tested in the sun." Fine ideals must leave the friendly confines of sanctuaries and the cloistered halls of academia and be exposed to the scrutiny of the marketplace. To be "blameless" suggests that the Philippians should not themselves stumble in their Christian walk, nor should they cause another to stumble by their behavior. Paul prays that what we love and how we love may make us holy and harmless.

As elsewhere in Scripture, "the fruit of righteousness" is "conduct pleasing to God."8 To demonstrate Christian love in ethical living means to give visible, bodily confirmation that we belong to God. This demonstration is not merely a performance. It is an authentic expression of who we are as Christians. Paul prays that the lives of the Philippians may blossom forth in a harvest of "righteousness." Being put right with God -- righteousness -- is not the destination of the Christian life. It is only its entrance. Righteousness must have its fruit, its consequences. It is possible for us to forfeit our salvation by not allowing Christ to produce the fruit of righteousness in our lives. His fruit is not a work that we can offer to merit our salvation. Righteousness begins and ends as a gift from Jesus Christ. It is entirely

His work. But we must give Him permission to produce His fruit in our lives and cultivate the crop He produces.

Righteousness begins with a right relationship with God. Growing out of this new relationship, we are empowered to live in a right relationship with our neighbors. Justification demonstrates itself in the doing of justice. Righteousness entails not only personal piety but also social responsibility. It is not enough to be harmless, to refrain from doing evil. Christians do good.

The demonstration of love Paul prays for could not be farther from the message of the supposedly Christian bumper sticker: Honk If You Love Jesus! If you love Jesus, do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). Any fool can honk! Demonstrate!

Finally, Paul says that this demonstration of love has as its object the glory and praise of God. Jesus put it this way: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, RSV). The good the Christian does is not a personal advertisement but, in the truest sense of the word, worship -- it assigns supreme worth to God.

When we gather to sing God's praises, to pray together, to share our mutual faith in Christ, to hear the preaching of God's Word -- this is not all there is to worship; this is only the preparation for true worship. True worship manifests itself in daily life. Either the whole of Christian life is worship, and our gatherings for formal public worship equip and instruct us for this, or these gatherings are absurd and empty and an insult to God (see Amos 5:2124). True Christian worship is the offering of our bodily existence in the sphere of the world as living sacrifices to God and in service to values that really matter.

This is my prayer for you:

"May your love grow more and more. May your love be infused with ethical sensitivity and spiritual discernment. May you learn the difference between good and evil and always choose what is best. May you be pure yourselves, and may your conduct cause no one else to do wrong. May you be always ready for Christ's return. May you do all the good you can, to all you can, for as long as you can, because, by the grace of Christ, you can. So live that you may bring glory and praise to God" (Phil. 1:9-11, author's paraphrase, cf. NCV).

I asked you earlier a personal question about your love life. Let me ask you now an even more personal question: If Paul's prayer were answered for you, how would your life be different?

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07 -- ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION -- 1 THESS. 5:23-24

INTRODUCTION

Near the end of his long life, which spanned nearly the entire 18th century, "John Wesley proposed that propagation of the message of entire sanctification was the chief reason why God had raised up his Methodist movement."1 Similarly, the Preamble of the constitution of the Church of the Nazarene affirms that the church exists "especially" to "preserve... the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace."2

I possess no special competence to assess Wesley's claim to knowledge of God's providential purposes in history. But I can assert, without fear of contradiction, that the doctrine of "Christian perfection" or "perfect love," as Wesley also called entire sanctification, "clearly became the focus of Methodism's most vigorous debates, both with opponents and within the movement."3 During the last 25 years, within the Holiness denominations that point to Wesley as their theological mentor, this doctrine has been at the center of heated scholarly debate. While professors in Holiness colleges and seminaries debate the fine points of the doctrine, preaching on this distinguishing emphasis-once the raison d'être of the Church of the Nazarene-has fallen silent in many quarters.

This is neither the time nor the place to dredge up the debates or critique the combatants. As a Bible teacher, my concern is to emphasize that neither Wesley nor the Church of the Nazarene invented this doctrine out of thin air. We cannot ignore the subject of sanctification, because its roots are not so shallow as to extend only to the 18th century. This is not some "latter-day doctrine"; Scripture compels us to take the call to holy living seriously.

As Keith Drury said in the closing session of NNC's Wesley Center for Applied Theology's Conference on "Holy Living in a Post-Christian Age" in February 1995, "Holiness is pervasive in the Bible. God called unto himself a holy nation, set aside a holy priesthood, established a holy Sabbath, prescribed only holy sacrifices, to be done on a holy mount, in a holy Temple, with a holy place -- even a holy of holies. God himself is a holy God. And we are 'called unto holiness.' Without holiness no one shall see the Lord [Heb. 12:14]."

God says, "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:45). The Bible constantly and repeatedly calls for our total surrender to God in absolute consecration, for our complete submission to His will, for absolute obedience to His Word, and for separation from the defilement of sin of this world. Holiness is not only the essential characteristic of God's nature but also the central emphasis of His Word. God is holy -- we are to be holy too.

Holiness is a Bible truth, not some denominational distinctive or pet doctrine of the Nazarenes, Wesleyans, or Free Methodists. It was not invented to provide differentiation in the church marketplace.

So-called Holiness churches do not have a corner on the market for holiness. In fact, holy living seems less a vital concern in some so-called Holiness churches than in other traditions.4 Lutheran New Testament scholar Karl P. Donfried observes:

"One reason the church today is so ineffectual in certain parts of the world is because it no longer offers pagan society an alternative intellectual or ethical option. Not only does the church seldom exist as a contrasting community over against the mores of society, but often it baptizes and incorporates into its existence behaviors that are blatantly opposed to the sanctified life in Jesus Christ .... One can hardly witness the life-giving power of the gospel if one's behavior is as scandalous, or even more scandalous, than those who worship idols."5

We Christian pastors and teachers find ourselves increasingly in the position of the first-century apostles. Our task is not simply to convert pagans or to indoctrinate converts. It is to Christianize the Church. For those of us who take seriously our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage, orthodoxy is not enough. We cannot justify our theological existence unless we actively promote "holiness of heart and life."

THE TERMINOLOGY OF HOLINESS

How are we to engender truly Christian living, to say nothing of some higher (or deeper) level of "holy living," where there is no preparation and few or inadequate precedents? Where do we begin? What can we learn from the pattern of the apostles? How did Paul nurture converts into mature Christians? First Thessalonians, his earliest surviving letter and probably the oldest Christian literature in existence, would seem to be an appropriate place to begin our investigation.

If vocabulary demonstrates anything, 1 Thessalonians must be a crucial document in any account of the biblical understanding of holiness. The frequent utilization of explicit holiness terminology in this brief letter is particularly noteworthy. There are more references to "holiness" per square inch here than anywhere else in the entire Bible. By "holiness terminology" I refer not only to words such as "holiness" and "holy" but also to the words "saint, ... sanctify," and "sanctification," which are simply alternate English renderings of the same underlying Greek word family. Thus, a "saint" is a "holy person." To "sanctify' -- that is, to "saintify" -- is to "make holy.... Sanctification" is the "process of making holy." And "holiness" is the "quality of being holy."

Crucial to any biblical understanding of holiness is the recognition that God alone is holy in the underived sense. In fact, to say that God is holy is to say little more than that He is God, that He is unique, that He is wholly other, that He is the Creator. Whatever holiness humans -- or other creatures, or things, or places, or

days -- enjoy exists by virtue of their special relationship to God. Thus the Sabbath was a "holy day" because it was set aside by God for rest, and worship, and activities devoted to God and divine interests. The Temple was called a "sanctuary' -- a "saint place," a "holy place' -- because it was devoted to the worship of God. And Israel was called a "holy people" because they were God's people, commissioned to represent Him and make Him known.

This should explain why God has a special interest in vindicating His holiness when His people do not represent Him well. It is not simply that they tarnish His hard-earned reputation. For God's people not to live as a holy people is to suggest that God is not really God, that He does not exist.

THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF HOLY LOVE

But if God does exist, what kind of God is He? That God acts to redeem, restore, reclaim, and renew His unworthy people demonstrates that the character of God is "holy love" -- a love so extraordinary, so unique, so compelling, that it defies human comprehension.

"And Can It Be?" (Sing to the Lord, No. 225)

Amazing love! How can it be...? -- Charles Wesley

O God! How can it be that You should keep Your covenant promises to us who have broken all of ours to You? How can it be that You should love Your rebellious creatures in such a way as to give Your only Son? How can it be that You would rather die than live without us?

"Such Love" (Sing to the Lord, No. 88)

That God should love a sinner such as I,
Should yearn to change my sorrow into bliss,
Nor rest till He had planned to bring me nigh --
How wonderful is love like this!*

-- C. Bishop

"My Savior's Love" (Sing to the Lord, No. 224)

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus, the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

Refrain:
How marvelous, How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous, How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

-- Charles H. Gabriel

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (Sing to the Lord, No. 239)

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

-- Isaac Watts

Such holiness is not only amazing but contagious! This is not to suggest that holiness makes people sick, nor that you can "catch" holiness simply by spending time in the company of a holy person. But it does mean that holiness is more powerful than sin. In fact, it has the power to defeat sin on its own turf. Authentic holiness is at least as contagious as laughter. Holiness is attractive and winsome. It transforms all it touches.

The contagious holiness I'm talking about is the life wholly given to the Holy One in behalf of an unholy world. It is the life of Jesus Christ lived out in the lives of ordinary people, who have been thoroughly cleansed from preoccupation with their own reputations and extraordinarily empowered by the reality of the sanctifying Spirit to reflect well the character of the God of holy love. Such holiness is contagious.

According to Wesley, when I know that I am ultimately and unreservedly loved by God; when I know that Christ died for my sins, even mine; when the Holy Spirit assures me that I am a child of God; I am a candidate for entire sanctification. Because I know God loves me, I live as a son -- with the gratitude of a son, not the drudgery of a slave. And because I am loved by God, I not only love Him unreservedly, I learn to love my neighbor as myself. And I find, much to my surprise, that my inner character is being progressively re-created in the likeness of my Creator. I find myself transformed to reflect increasingly the character of Christ. I discover that I am free from my addiction to rebellion. I long to give wholehearted obedience to God. And I find that, remarkably enough, I can. I am delighted to discover that my disposition, my words, my works, my habits are being thoroughly renewed, by an alien righteous.

Wesley referred to this all-encompassing work of grace in the lives of believers as "entire sanctification" or "holiness of heart and life." It is not so superficial as to be only a performance for public consumption. Nor is it so private as to be known only to God. Holy living is a visible expression of an invisible reality. It arises from the hidden spring of what Wesley called our "affections." By this he did not mean simply our "feelings." He referred to that indefinable personal quality we sometimes call "character." Character is the habit of soul that motivates us to act as we do when we think no one is watching, when we are simply being ourselves. The "motivating inclinations" that define our character involve an integration of reason and emotion, cultivated by "disciplined practice."6

Grace-infused dispositions have the power to transform our deportment. Christian character is not formed like a squash plant, which grows to maturity over a summer. It is more like an oak tree, requiring a lifetime. Holy character does not develop overnight, nor without effort on our part. Holy living has a "supernatural" origin. But it becomes increasingly "natural," when it is cultivated. The "habituated affections" of entirely sanctified people do not make them robots, mindlessly manipulated by God. "Disciplined practice" gives us the freedom to do almost spontaneously what our transformed character desires.7

God loves us so much, he accepts us just as we are. But He loves us too much to leave us as we are. Grace is not God overlooking our shortcomings. It is God enabling us to be more than we could be if left to our own resources. God loves us too much to coerce obedience. So He leaves us with the freedom to make contrary choices, to live irresponsibly. We are free to choose, but not free to choose the consequences of our choices. If we practice the love of God and neighbors, we become better at it. As we respond to being perfectly loved by God, we are enabled to love other creatures and our Creator with perfect love. This love is the secret source of every other Christian virtue. Like every other talent God gives, we become proficient at holy living only as we practice it.

Neither the capacity to live a holy life nor its progress are self-generated. This is why Wesley places such emphasis upon "social holiness" and "the means of grace."

We cannot be holy alone. Holiness is cultivated in the context of holy community -- renewed people bound together by a covenant of grace, mutually accountable, and committed to grow together in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Life in community both enables and tests our growth in sanctification.

Wesley "valued the means of grace both as avenues by which God conveys the gracious Presence that enables our responsive growth in holiness and as 'exercises' by which we responsibly nurture that holiness."8 Randy Maddox suggests that

"the best way to capture Wesley's affectional view of entire sanctification.., is to say that he was convinced that the Christian life did not have to remain a life of perpetual struggle. He believed that both Scripture and Christian tradition attested that God's loving grace can transform sinful human lives to the point where our own love for God and others becomes a free response. Christians can aspire to take on the disposition of Christ, and live out that disposition within the constraints of our human infirmities. To deny this possibility would be to deny the sufficiency of God's empowering grace -- to make the power of sin greater than that of grace."9

THE CONTAGION OF INCARNATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

First Thessalonians suggests that the possibility of a sanctified community begins with the powerful and convincing work of the Holy Spirit. But this is never experienced apart from the appeal of the gospel -- not only in the preached Word but also incarnated in the lives of faithful preachers. Paul says, "You know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake" (1:5, NRSV). The Thessalonians' encounter with contagious holiness in the lives of other human beings enabled them to turn "to God from idols," to remain faithful even in the midst of intense persecution (vv. 9, 6), and to become examples to other believers (v. 7). They had learned from observing the example of Paul and his associates how "to live and to please God" (4:1, NRSV). In word and deed Paul had urged them to "lead a life worthy of God, who [had called them] into his own kingdom and glory" (2:12, NRSV).

Behavior that was "worthy" of their calling was a manner of life that was appropriate to or consistent with the calling they had received from God. They had been called to have a share in God's Kingly rule. They had been called to praise God with their lives. He had not called them "to impurity but in holiness" (4:7, NRSV). His gracious call enabled them to live up to His high expectations.

The holiness to which Paul pointed the Thessalonians involved dispositions and deportment that were consistent with the character of God. If Christians are called upon to live lives worthy of a holy God, theology is not a luxury but a necessity. An adequate understanding of God is essential to the intelligent proclamation of holiness. But the first lessons we must learn about the character of God are to be found in the lives of contagious holiness of God's people, not on the pages of Scripture or a catechism, much less in a volume on theology, a commentary, or the church Manual.

Christian morality cannot be reduced to a list of rules. It is the standing ovation we give God with our lives when we are gripped by His demonstrated love in the past, His continuing faithfulness in the present, and His hopes for our future. The character of Christians is fundamentally different from that of pagans because of the character of our God. Pagans behave as they do because they "do not know God" (4:5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; Gal. 4:9). Christian morality is no more and no less than living "a life worthy of God," who loved us enough to die for us in Jesus Christ.

How we actually live reflects who we are and whose we are. To live worthy of our calling is to become what God's grace enables us to be. To live otherwise is to profane His holy name.

Paul was convinced that no one needed to teach the Thessalonians to love one another, for they had "been taught by God to love one another" (4:9, NRSV). But this did not prevent him from praying, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all" (3:12, NRSV). The expression of their love was not a "warm, fuzzy feeling," but the mutual encouragement, upbuilding, respect, and patience that sought always to do good to one another and to all (5:11-15).

Paul was persuaded that the way the Thessalonians lived already pleased God. But this did not prevent him from urging them to "do so more and more" (4:1, NRSV). Or from praying, "May he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (3:13, NRSV). In a world where sex was worshiped as a god, Paul insisted, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God" (4:3-5, NRSV).

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Paul closes his first letter to the Thessalonians with the prayer that is our text. Significantly, this verse contains the New Testament's only explicit reference to entire sanctification: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:23, NRSV). He follows this prayer with an expression of confidence, "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this" (v. 24, NRSV).

Lives of authentic holiness lived in this present world and for the world are the most appropriate expressions of praise to God possible. Holy living witnesses to the world of God's reality. It is the only contagion able to convict the world of its need for God.

Sanctification that operates only within the sheltered sanctuary of the church buildings, on the campus of a Christian college, or in the friendly confines of our homes is not entire enough. We cannot imagine that the word "entire," in "entire sanctification," implies that we have no room for progress once we are sanctified.

Not at all. God's sanctifying work in our lives is an ongoing process that only begins with "a second trip to the altar." God does not sanctify us so that we may simply be holy. We are sanctified in order to obey (see 1 Pet. 1:2) and to serve (see Rom. 6:17-22; 7:4-6; 12:1-2).

The word "entire" concerns not the conclusion but the inclusiveness of God's sanctifying work. He longs to rule every area of our lives. Nothing is excluded from the areas of our lives that He would rule. That's why Paul prays as he does in our text, "May God . . . sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless [until] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The [God] who calls you [to holiness] is faithful and he will [sanctify you]" (vv. 23-24).

If we are entirely sanctified, it should be evident in more than the private, personal realms of our lives. It will manifest itself in the social moral cultural, economic, environmental, and political realms of our lives.

CONCLUSION

Some within the Holiness tradition in the past were guilty of trivializing the call to holiness into legalism. Today some have been guilty of abandoning the call to holiness and assimilating to the world. Others have been guilty of marginalizing holiness to the private realms of personal piety and good intentions. First Thessalonians witnesses to a holiness that is both visible and contagious.

In our appropriate rejection of legalism, we must not neglect the important matters of the law -- justice, mercy, and faithfulness. We dare not allow human traditions to replace the commandments of God. Compromise with evil is not a viable alternative. But neither is imagining that evil is more contagious than holiness.

Jesus insisted that it is what comes out of us that makes us unclean. It is what we do, not what is done to us, that defiles us. It is the evil that comes from within our hearts that demonstrates our need for cleansing. "Evil thoughts, sexual sins, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, evil actions, lying, doing sinful things, jealousy, speaking evil of others, pride, and foolish living. All these evil things come from inside and make people unclean" (Mark 7:21-23, NCV).

And so we return to some basic questions: Which is more powerful? Holiness or uncleanness? Love or hate? Grace or sin? Are we so "truly sanctified" that our lives witness to the world of the cleansing reality of God? Have we been so "entirely sanctified" that no dimension of our lives is excluded from His sanctifying Spirit?

Some settle for performance without reality. Others settle for security without service. Still others settle for secularization instead of sanctification. Each of these approaches fails to take seriously the contagious power of holiness.

I am not talking about the power of a precious term or even a cherished doctrine. If the words "holiness" and "entire sanctification" are meaningless terms in your religious vocabulary, you have my permission to abandon them

immediately. You may prefer to talk about Christian "integrity, ... principled living, ... accountability, ... character, ... discipline," "authenticity, ... godliness," or "authentic spirituality." Whatever terms you use, do not imagine that you can set the terms for your discipleship. The terms set by Jesus still apply: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:34-35, NRSV).

The contagious holiness I'm talking about is the life wholly given to a holy God on behalf of a sinful world. It is the life of Jesus Christ lived out in the lives of ordinary people, who have been thoroughly cleansed from preoccupation with self and extraordinarily empowered by the reality of the sanctifying Spirit. This holiness is contagious. Catch it!

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. There is a historical explanation for the similarity of the terms. The ancient popular philosophers known as Cynics disdained polite society to live naturally -- like dogs. Cynics today have a similar distrust of conventional wisdom.

2. For an example of the variety of possible interpretations of the biblical concept of holiness see Melvin E. Dieter, ed., Five Views on Sanctification (Grand Rapids: Zondervan [Academie], 1987).

3. For a recent serious study of the term by an author from outside the Holiness tradition see David Peterson, Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness, in New Studies in Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

4. John Wesley was not concerned to preserve precious terms for their own sake. He more than once urged a critical audience: "Be not angry with me if I cannot judge it proper to use any one expression every two minutes. You may, if you please; but do not condemn me because I do not .... Bear with me, as I do with you; else how shall we 'fulfil the law of Christ?' Do not make tragical outcries, as though I were 'subverting the very foundations of Christianity.'... If there were a difference of opinion, where is our religion, if we cannot think and let think?... How much more, when there is only a difference of expression? Nay, hardly so much as that? all the dispute being only whether a particular mode of expression shall be used more or less frequently?" ("The Lord Our Righteousness," in The Works of John Wesley, 3rd ed., 14 vols., ed. Thomas Jackson [1872; reprint, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978], Sermon 20, 2.20.3.)

5. W. T. Purkiser, The Biblical Foundations, vol. 1 of Exploring Christian Holiness (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1983), 13-14.

6. Hebrew hol in Lev. 10:10 and Ezek. 22:26.

7. Thomas E. McComiskey, "qadash -- be hallowed, holy, sanctified; to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate," in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:787.

8. In Gen. 38:21-22; Deut. 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Job 36:14; Hos. 4:14.

9. William M. Ramsay, The Westminster Guide to the Books of the Bible (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 425.

10. First Thessalonians has a higher density of holiness terms than any other Pauline letter. With 1,482 words in the Greek text (Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th ed. Ed. Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Kurt Aland et al. [Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993]), 1 Thessalonians makes up only 4.6 percent of the total words in the Pauline corpus (32,440). Yet its percentage of explicit references to holiness is more than twice the average of the letters combined (.675 compared to .327). By explicit holiness terminology I refer to the cognate group derived from the Greek roots hagi- and hagn-, which include hagiazo ("I sanctify' -- 5:23), hagiasmos ("sanctification" -- 4:3, 4, 7), hagios ("holy" -- 1:5, 6; 3:13; 4:8; 5:26), hagiotes ("holiness"), hagiosyne ("holiness" -- 3:13), hagneia ("purity"), hagnizo ("I purify"), hagnismos ("purification"), hagnos ("pure"), hagnotes ("purity"), and hagnos ("purely"). In addition to these, 1 Thess. 2:10 contains the New Testament's only example of the adverb hosios ("holily"). (Statistics based on data provided by "GRAMCORD" Grammatical Concordance System Computer Software [Gramcord Institute, Vancouver, Wash.], <http: / / www.GRAMCORD.org>.)

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CHAPTER 2

1. Peterson, Possessed by God, 80.

2. Ibid., 79.

3. Ibid., 68.

4. Ibid. This is certainly a narrowly drawn caricature of the Holiness Movement's teaching as to the fundamental meaning of sanctification. Peterson is persuaded that "regeneration and sanctification are two different ways of describing Christian initiation or conversion" (p. 63; see also pp. 139-42).

5. Ibid., 68.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 67.

8. Ibid., 68.

9. Ibid., 61. Peterson, however, disagrees. For example, he considers "progressive moral transformation" the "least likely" of the interpretations of sanctification in 1 Thess. 4:3. He prefers to speak of a "definitive" or "positional" sanctification and a "state" of holiness. He insists that "the popular view that sanctification is a process of moral renewal and change, following justification, is not the emphasis of the New Testament. Rather, sanctification is primarily another way of describing what it means to be converted" (p. 136).

10. Peterson, Possessed by God, 79.

11. Ibid., 80.

12. Ibid. Despite the obvious similarities to Wesley's views, Peterson is adamant that "there is no suggestion that a second 'crisis of faith' can bring us to an immediate perfection in love or to a new level of spirituality where practical holiness becomes more attainable" (p. 81). This is because he equates entire sanctification with glorification (see the discussion in connection with nn. 3 and 7).

13. F. F. Bruce (1 and 2 Thessalonians, in Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983], 82) observes that "chastity is not the whole of sanctification, but it is an important element in it, and one which had to be specially stressed in the Greco-Roman world of that day." And we might add, in ours as well.

14. Peterson, Possessed by God, 80; see 82.

15. Ibid., 66. He says that Paul was "praying for such holiness to be thoroughgoing in their lives to the end."

16. Ibid., 65.

17. Ibid., 66.

18. Ibid., 67.

19. Ibid., 65.

20. Ibid., 66; citing Gordon P. Wiles, Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul, New Testament Monograph Series 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 66.

21. Peterson, Possessed by God, 66.

22. From the Greek preposition en, which has a broad range of possible meanings. The NIV paraphrases it in both of its appearances in 3:13. A fairly literal translation of this verse would read: "in order to strengthen your heart in [en] holiness before our God and Father with [en] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his holy ones."

23. Peterson correctly notes that Paul's prayer in 1 Thess. 5:23-24, "like the one in 3:11-13, is ultimately oriented towards the return of Christ and has as its object the condition of believers at that decisive time" (p. 65). But this should not imply, as he presumes, that sanctification is only entire at the Second Coming. This presumption arises from a subtle change in the terms of the discussion because of his quotations of Wiles, who claims that "in both prayers the apostle desires for the Thessalonians a perfection of holiness which goes far beyond and beneath merely outward ethical norms and behavior, and envisages their whole beings made ready to stand in the presence of God and Christ" (Wiles similarly misinterprets 1 Thess. 3:8: "They are strengthened inwardly in love now, so they will be rendered blameless in holiness at the parousia') (Wiles, Paul's Intercessory Prayers, 62). Peterson has apparently forgotten his insight about 1 Thess. 5:23 "gathering up" 4:1 -- 5:22. So how can it go "far beyond and beneath" the issues at stake in this section? Is there any justification for shifting from a discussion of entire sanctification to "perfection of holiness"? And when are the "whole beings" of believers "made ready to stand in the presence of God and Christ" if not in this life? And if in this life, when? Peterson also correctly notes that the context of 5:23 makes it clear that "'entire sanctification' in this context does not simply refer to an individual's spiritual development." True enough. But simply because it has a collective, "corporate dimension" does not exclude the individual.

24. Peterson, Possessed by God, 38.

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CHAPTER 3

1. David L. Thompson, "God Will Clear His Name," Illustrated Bible Life 16, No. 2 (December -- February, 1992-93): 59.

2. Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13 -- 39: A Commentary, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1974), 8.

3. Ibid., 9.

4. Melissa Morgan, "Getting What You Don't Deserve" (Teaching Section), Adult Teacher 16, No. 2 (December -- February 1992-93): 103.

5. A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists, ed. John Wesley, with a new supplement (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1889), 201.

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CHAPTER 4

1. Roland De Vaux ("Rites of Purification and Deconsecration," in Religious Institutions, vol. 2 of Ancient Israel, trans, from the French original [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965], 460) comments: "A mother had to purify herself after childbirth, because it made her impure, and a priest had to change his clothes after a sacrifice, because it made him a consecrated person. Yet this impurity is not to be understood as a physical or moral defilement, and this kind of holiness is not to be understood as a moral virtue: they are rather 'states' or 'conditions' from which men must emerge in order to re-enter normal life."

2. D. Elton Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 31-32.

3. For a survey, see William C. Spohn, What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics? (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).

4. John 17:17-23 reports the burden of Jesus' high-priestly prayer:

"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

5. In doing so, Jesus was not merely flying in the face of legalistic, latter-day traditions. Some Old Testament laws warn of the dangers of indiscriminate contact with uncleanness (see Lev. 13; 15; 22:4b-9; Num. 5:2; 9:6-8; 16:26; 19; Deut. 23). To come into close contact with lepers was to risk infection oneself. To be touched by someone suffering from a bodily discharge was to be made unclean oneself. To

touch a dead body was to be contaminated. To associate with non-Jews was to put one's holiness in peril.

6. Ernst Käisemann, Commentary on Romans, trans, and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 327.

7. Ibid., 327-29.

8. "List of Poetical Works published by the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley with the Prefaces Connected with Them," in Wesley, Works, 14:321.

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CHAPTER 5

1. Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians: A Commentary, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 292.

2. Ibid., 293.

3. The brackets in this quotation reflect the replacement of the NIV's translation of the Greek word sarx as "sinful nature" with its literal meaning, "flesh." The same Greek word is translated inconsistently in the NIV. Sarx may be used in a completely neutral, even positive sense. But it may also be used in an entirely negative sense to refer to human existence turned away from God and obsessed with, even enslaved by, itself.

4. Betz, Galatians, 295.

5. Paul asks the Corinthians: "Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

6. John Wesley's note on Gal. 5:25 cautions: "Be not desirous of vain glory -- of the praise or esteem of men. They who do not carefully and closely follow the Spirit easily slide into this: the natural effects of which are, provoking to envy them that are beneath us, and envying them that are above us." Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986 reprint).

7. This explains Paul's warning in Gal. 5:15: "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

8. Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans, and adapted by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. prolambano.

9. Franz Delling, "lambano, ktl.," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT), ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans, and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), 4:14.

10. Betz, Galatians, 296.

11. Ibid., 298.

12. Ibid., 299 and n. 61.

13. This frequently repeated truism is widely attributed to D. L. Moody.

14. Adapted from two versions of this "Sermon Illustration" in the digital collection prepared by Duane Maxey and available at <http://netnow.micron.net/-hdmdownload:hdm0186.zip>. One version is credited to Paxton Hood.

15. Betz, Galatians, 301.

16. Ibid., 304.

17. Composite Scholastic Aptitude Test scores dropped from an average of 937 in 1972 to 902 in 1992. In 1972 only 28.4 percent of the college-bound students taking the SAT had an A or B average; in 1992 this figure had climbed to 83 percent. (Statistics provided by Educational Testing Service [Princeton, N.J.].) A 1992 Gallup poll reported in "Hey, I'm Terrific!" in Newsweek (February 17, 1992), 50, that only 7 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds claim to have low self-esteem.

18. Statistics reported in Martin Bolt and David G. Myers, The Human Connection: How People Change People (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1984), 26.

19. Betz, Galatians, 301. 20. Ibid., 303. 21. Ibid.

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CHAPTER 6

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., s.v. "discriminate."

2. Randy Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism" in Asbury Theological Journal 50, No. 2 (fall 1995) and 51, No. 1 (spring 1996): 151.

3. Ibid., citing Wesley's "Letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily, of Cork," Works, 9:85.

4. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 151.

5. Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

6. Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. diaphero 2b.

7. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Philippians, in Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 43:187.

8. Ibid., 29. He cites Prov. 11:30; Amos 6:12; and James 3:12.

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CHAPTER 7

1. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 151, citing Wesley's letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury (Sept. 15, 1790), The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 8:238.

2. Manual, Church of the Nazarene, 1993-97 (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1993), 26.

3. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 151.

4. The next few paragraphs are borrowed or adapted from my article "Modeling the Holiness Ethos: A Study Based on First Thessalonians," Wesleyan Theological Journal 30, No. 1 (1995): 187.

5. Karl Paul Donfried, "The Theology of 1 Thessalonians," in The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters, in New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 76. 6. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 153.

7. The quoted expressions are from Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 153. The author is responsible for the elaborations.

8. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life," 154.

9. Ibid., 155.

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