

HOLINESS DEMANDED

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A SERMON

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“Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.”
Hebrews 12:14.

ONE feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet which he must sometimes blow, for thus says the Lord to him, “Blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in My holy mountain.” There are times when we must sound the alarm—men must be startled from their sleep, they must be awakened to enquire, “What are we? Where are we? Where are we going?” Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels and for the most sound Christians to sometimes be constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, “Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.”

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the *imputed holiness* of Christ. Do they not know when they so speak, that by an open perversion they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context—“Follow peace with all people, and holiness.” Now the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace—and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace! That is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but “the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace.” We are to follow holiness—that must be practical holiness, the opposite of impurity, as it is written, “God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow. I mean if we look at it *imputatively*—that we have at once—it is *given* to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed—it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus!

Our text speaks of another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as everyone can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul by which a man is made like God and becomes a partaker of the Divine Nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it! There it stands, whether men like it or not! There are some who for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or jails—yet there it stands and it means no other than what it says! “Without holiness”—practical, personal, active, vital holiness—“no one shall see the Lord.” Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth and all enjoyment of Christ in Heaven, I shall endeavor, first, *to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he has this holiness or not.* Secondly, *to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact,* “Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.” And then, thirdly, *to plead hard, in Christ's place, with those who are lovers of gain that they may consider this before time is over and opportunity past.*

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, you are anxious to know whether you have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that without *perfection of holiness*, no one could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one who knows his own heart ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will! It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," but, "holiness." This holiness is a thing of *growth*. It may be in the soul as small as a grain of mustard seed and yet not developed. It may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized—a groan, a pant, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard seed shall become a tree. Holiness in a regenerate heart, is but an infant. It is not matured—it is perfect in all its parts, but not perfect in its development. Hence when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the Grace of God. This would be altogether contrary to the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as, *what it is not*, I think while I am endeavoring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable Grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness. First, there is *the Pharisee*. The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses—his anise, his mint, his cummin—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed! He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries and makes broad the borders of his garment—in fact, anything and everything that is commanded ceremonially, he most punctiliously attends to! But all the while he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic Sinner, hear the death-knell of your hopes tolled out by this verse! "Without holiness"—and that is a thing you know nothing of—"no man shall see the Lord." Your ceremonies are vain and frivolous! Even if God ordained them, seeing you put your trust in *them*, they shall utterly deceive and fail you, for they do not constitute even a *part* of holiness. You cannot see God till your heart is changed, till your nature is renewed, till your actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where not the works of the Law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my Hearer, that those fine hopes of yours built upon the maneuvers of the priests and upon your own performances shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them! Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when you most need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness!

Then there is *the moralist*. He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true—perhaps he even despises them—he treats his neighbor with integrity, he believes that as far as he knows, if his ledger is examined, it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the Law of God, he is blameless! No one ever doubted the purity of his manner—from his youth up his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what everyone could desire and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety! Ah, but this is *not* holiness before God! Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness, for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objectives, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep—holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God and that it shall beat with love to Him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that.

I think I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse—well washed, robed and even embalmed with spices—but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life! Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms—holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars! These two are of opposite natures—the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It is not said in Heaven, "Moral, moral, moral are You, O God!" But, "Holy, holy, holy are You, O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, icy cold. The other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality and such is holiness! Moralist—I know I speak to many such—remember that your best morality will not save you! You must have more than this, for without holiness—and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God—without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.

Another individual who thinks to get on without holiness and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles is *the experimentalist*. You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward. To tell you the truth, there is no life at all, but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, discoursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree. Having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go, they cut off everybody's head who is taller than they are and stretching every man out by the neck who happens to be a little too short! I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist—a "letter man," I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing—not following peace with all people, but stirring up strife against all—this is the practice of their religion! This is the summit to which they climb and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are starving to serve God and to do good in their day and generation.

Now I pray you to remember that against such men as these there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly leveled. I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt. You may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced. But if your own outward life is unjust, unholy, ungenerous and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ! "Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord." The moment you know a man who is drunk on a Saturday night and then enjoys So-and-So's preaching on Sunday. The moment you know a man who can tell you what a child of God should be and then appears himself exactly what he should *not* be—just quit his company and let him go to his own place! And where is that? Judas can tell you! Oh, beware of such highfliers with their waxen wings mounting up to the very sun—how great shall be their fall when He that searches all hearts shall open the book and say, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. . . Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it not to Me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but there are some among us still—*opinionists* who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line—they think they have got hold of *the* Truth of God, that they are *the* men and that when they die, the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can—

*"A hair divide
Betwixt the west and north-west side."*

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D. D." years ago, for they know everything and are not a little proud that they do! And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion! We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If we could do you good, we might be glad to see you, but you do so much harm to the rest and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large that your absence would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon and sometimes, perhaps, have the condescension to speak well of the preacher who wishes you would not. Yet, after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a bar just opened at one o'clock and the brother refreshes himself and perhaps does so many times! Even if it is the Lord's Day, it is all the same and yet he is a dear and precious child of God? No doubt he is in his own estimation! And then, during the week, he lives as others live and acts as others act—and yet congratulates himself that he knows the Truth of God and understands the Doctrines of the Gospel and, therefore, he will surely be saved! Out with you, man! Out with you! Down with your hopes! "Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord"—

*"No big words of ready talkers,
No mere Doctrines will suffice—
Broken hearts and humble walkers—
These are dear in Jesus' eyes."*

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work—this is what the Lord wants! You may perish as well with true Doctrines as with false if you pervert the true Doctrine into licentiousness! You may go to Hell by the Cross as surely as you may by the theater, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips and with a sound creed

sealed on your very bosom for, “except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Now, if any of you belong to either of these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it and, being *destitute of Gospel holiness*, you have good cause to bewail your character and tremble for your destiny!

But to help you still further, Brothers and Sisters, that man is destitute of true holiness *who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow*. Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at 15 years of age, but those 15 years of unregeneracy—we can never forget them! Others may say, “We did not know Him till we were 50 or sixty.” Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life! I can look back upon God’s mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some recall their past lives, talk of their old sins and seem to roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander—

*“He fought his battles over again,
And twice he slew the slain.”*

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination all over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness, or some act of infamy and, as they think it over, they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled—but they love the thought and cultivate it with a vicious zest! You are no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes you profound sorrow and sends you to your knees to weep and hope that God, for Christ’s sake, has blotted it out!

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness *if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation*. Have I someone here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah, Sir, if you can think of those things that may come in your way without tremor, I suspect you! I would you would suspect yourself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ we have always woke up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me—and I must confess it—and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious luster. But when gray hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God’s heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end lest haply, in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind—“He that thinks he stands may yet fall”? And the very possibility of such a thing—does it not drive you to God’s Mercy Seat and do you not cry, “Hold me up my God and I shall be safe”? There is no doxology in Scripture which I enjoy more than that one at the end of the Epistle of Jude—“Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to Him be glory.” I say you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, I think you have great cause for questioning unless *your holiness is uniform*. I mean if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home—you must suspect that it is *at home* that you are what you really are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family for they, after all, see the most of us and know the truth about us. And if, Sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop to be amiable, Christian and God-like to the passer-by—if your children should have to mark your unkindness, your lack of fatherly affection for their souls and your wife to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like—you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart! O Sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea! That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light! That man is not right with God who does not feel, “If every eye should look upon me I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me. That which keeps me right is not the judgment and opinions of men, but the eyes of the Omnipresent and the heart of the Lord who loves me.”

Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know in the country maintain a credible profession in the village where they live. They go to a place of worship and seem to be very good people—but there is a farmer’s dinner once a year—it

is only once a year and we will not say anything about how they get home. The less of that is said, the better for their reputation. "It, is only once a year," they tell us, but holiness does not allow dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there." And therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, Sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate, it is good for nothing! I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, Sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as I like. I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he enquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply. "I do not stay away because of any law, for it is no trial to me, but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply, "I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly—it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society, because I do not join in their revelry and wantonness—it is not my element and I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be repulsive and painful!" You are a stranger to holiness if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark that *those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy*. We know of some who will not, themselves, perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet if another does so and there is a laugh excited upon some not overly-decent remark, they laugh and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy it—they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise—they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there! They are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go but, seeing that they do it, you go too—and there you see others engaged in sin and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance.

There are many things, in this world that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it, after all. It is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! Mind! Mind, professor! If your heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin, it is unsound in the sight of God! If you can even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it that you will soon shut your eyes on your own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are with ourselves! There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them! Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we are among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no one can see God!

But, Beloved, we hope better things of you and things which accompany salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God feel that we would be holy if we could, that there is not a sin we wish to spare, that we would be like Jesus—O that we could!—that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin and displease our God. If our heart is really right in God's statutes then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness wherein we may rejoice! And we pray to our gracious God—

***"Finish, then, Your new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be."***

II. Now then, for the second point very briefly, indeed—"Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord." That is to say no one can have communion with God in this life and no one can have enjoyment with God in the life to come without holiness. "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" If you go with Belial, do you think that Christ will go with you? Will Christ be a pot companion for you? Do you expect to take the Lord of Love and Mercy with you to the haunts of sin? Professor, do you think the Just and Holy One will stand at your counter to be co-trader with you in your tricks? What do you think, O man! Would you make Christ a sharer of your guilt? And yet He would be so if He had fellowship with you in it! No, if you will go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with you or, rather, you never did have any fellowship with Him at all! You have gone out from us because you were not of us, for, if you had been of us, doubtless you would have continued with us.

And as to Heaven, do you think to go there with your unholiness? God smote an angel down from Heaven for sin—and will He let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish Heaven than see sin spoil it! It is enough for Him to bear with your hypocrisies on earth—shall He have them flung in His face in Heaven? What? Shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better Paradise? No, no! God has sworn by His holiness—and He will not, He cannot lie—that those who are not holy, whom His Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good and hate that which is evil shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous! Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no one shall see Him without holiness!

III. I come to my last point which is to plead with you. Doubtless, there are some in this vast crowd who have some sort of longings after salvation and after Heaven. My eye looks around. Yes, sometimes it has been my habit to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose cases I know. Do I not remember one? He has been very often impressed and so impressed that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God—and there is only one thing in his way—strong drink! By the time Wednesday or Thursday comes around he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes he has taken the pledge and kept it three months—but the craving has been too strong for him and then he has given all resolutions and vows up and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before!

I know others in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come in the morning and yet, when you come at night you feel it very severely. But why not come in the morning? Because your shop is open and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, “Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience—but I cannot yet, I cannot yet.” And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for lack of reasoning with you and weeping over you! Let me put it to you—do you say that you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit? Profit? Forget it! “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” What profit have you obtained to now? You have put it all into a bag full of holes! What you have earned one way, you have spent in another and you know that if this life were all, you surely have not been any the better for it! Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I plead with you, lose not gold for dross! Lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain!

But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure—it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens to beset you, such an intense longing and, in looking back upon it afterwards, you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is hidden from all hearts but your own? O Soul, what is this pleasure, after all? Weigh it, weigh it! What does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs you now—to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor, who had led a loose life, came to die, he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor and he said, “Find that word, find that word!” “What word?” they asked. “Why,” he said, “that awful word—remorse!” He said it again—“Remorse!” And then gathering up his full strength, he fairly seemed to shriek it out—“*REMORSE!*” “Write it,” he said, “write it.” It was written. “Write it with larger letters and let me gaze at it. Underline it. And now,” he said, “none of you know the meaning of that word and may you never know it! It has an awful meaning in it and I feel it now—*Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!*”

What, I ask, is the pleasure of sin contrasted with the results it brings in this life? And what, I ask, is this pleasure compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ! We who believe in Him have our sorrows, but, blessed be God, we have our joys and they are such joys—oh, such joys with such substance in them and such reality and certainty—that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except Heaven in its fruition!

And then, think, Sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of your soul? There is a gentleman, high in position in this world with fair lands and a large estate who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon—and he never hears me preach without weeping—said to me, “O Sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool!” “And what for?” I asked. “Why,” he said, “for the sake of that court, of those gaities of life, of mere honor and dress and fashion I am squandering away my soul! I know,” he said, “I know the Truth of God, but I do

not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do what is right, but I go on just as I have done before. I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool I am,” he said, “to choose pleasures that only last a little while and then to be lost forever and forever!” I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain. There was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! Alas! If we had to deal with *sane men*, our preaching would be easy—but sin is a madness—such a madness that when men are bitten by it, they cannot be persuaded even though one should rise from the dead. “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

“But,” I hear someone say, “it is impossible! I have tried it and I have broken down. I did try to get better, but I did not succeed. It is of no use, it cannot be done!” You are right, my dear Friend, and you are wrong. You are right—it is of no use going about it as you did. If you went in *your own strength*, holiness is a thing you cannot get—it is beyond you. The depth says, “It is not in me.” And the height says, “It is not in me.” You can no more make yourself holy than you could create a world! But you are wrong to despair, for *Christ can do it!* He can do it for you and He can do it now! Believe on Him and that believing will be the proof that He is working in you. Trust Him and He that has suffered for your sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in and put to rout the lion of the Pit! He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for Him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for Him to break. He can turn a lion to a lamb and a raven to a dove. Trust Him to save you and He will do it, whoever you may be, and whatever your past life may have been!

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—that is, he shall be saved from his sins and delivered from his evil practices. He shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor Soul, that Christ is able to save you and He will do it! He will be as good as your faith and as good as His own word. May He now add His own blessing to the word I have spoken and to the people who have heard it for His own sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 32.*

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* The Lord can bless the man who is full of sin only when his sin is covered by the Atonement—the Propitiation—which hides his sin even from the sight of God! And he is a truly blessed who, although he knows himself to be a sinner, also knows that his sin is forgiven and covered.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He is an honest, truthful, guileless man. A man cannot be a blessed man while he is double-minded, while he has graft or, what is here called, guile, within him. A sincere and guileless heart is an evidence of Grace so, “blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” But, David, how did you obtain this forgiveness? Let us hear the story of your experience.

3, 4. *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* He tells us that he had such a sense of guilt that he could not rest. And until he made confession of his sin to God, he became sick in body as well as in soul. It seemed as if his very bones, the most solid part of his frame, were beginning to decay under the influence of his grief and he was getting worse and worse in the brokenness of his spirit till he seemed like a dried-up country in which there is no dew. His moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Yes, David, but how did you get rid of your sin? We see how deeply you felt it—how did you get clear of it?

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* You see, as long as he covered his sin, God did not cover it. But when he no longer tried to hide it, but made an open confession of it, then God blotted it out and covered it up forever! There was but a believing confession of sin and David’s heart was at once at rest! Shall we not try the same remedy? Will we not go to God and say, “Father, I have sinned”? Is there any better course than that? Is it not right to acknowledge a wrong? Is it not the simplest and safest way to go at once to Him who blots out sin and ask for mercy?

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place: You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall*

compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. Surely if God has given us the pardon of our sin, He will give us everything else that we need! If He has delivered us from Hell, He will certainly deliver us from trouble!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* The forgiven man is afraid of going wrong again. He is as anxious about his future life as he was about his past sin. So the Lord meets him and gives him the gracious promise contained in this verse.

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Do not be hard-mouthed. Be obedient to God's will. Be tender of heart and willing of spirit. The Lord will make His children go in the right way, somehow or other. He will put a bit into their mouths if nothing else will do it, but it would be much better for them if they would be of tender and gentle spirit and would yield at once to His gracious and holy will.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* Godly men also have many sorrows, but then they always have sweets with their bitters, but, "many sorrows shall be to the wicked," and there will be no sweets to go with them.

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* He shall have mercy all round him. He who trusts his God shall find that the golden compasses of Divine Mercy shall strike a circle of gracious protection all round him—"mercy shall compass him about."

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Godly men ought to be glad men. They have a right to be happy. They recommend the Gospel when they are so and they are the true sons of the King of kings when they do not go mourning all their days.

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