

# Scriptural Holiness.

With, or without  
OBEDIENCE ?

By the  
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the Successors of the Apostolic Churches?" etc., etc.

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# Scriptural Holiness. With or Without Obedience ?

By Rev. T. H. SQUIRE, D.D.

*"Perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Cor. vii. 1).

Two Christian brethren stood before a huge poster on which were displayed the words :—

"GREAT HOLINESS MEETING";

and the following conversation ensued :—

A. That's what I believe in, brother (pointing at the word "Holiness"). I maintain that every Christian should go in for holiness.

B. I heartily agree with you, for it is the teaching of the Word of God.

A. Then, I take it, you have come out for the blessing ?

B. What do you mean ?

A. Well, I'll explain by giving you my experience. I was converted ten years ago, but I didn't understand what sanctification was until about two years since. I had kept on trying to overcome sin, but found it a hard fight. One day, however, I went to a holiness meeting, where I was shown that I was wrong. The speaker said that if we would come to the Lord, lay our all on the altar, give up our idols, and just take

sanctification by faith, as we had taken salvation, then we should have a clean heart, and know the perfect rest and peace of the higher life.

B. And did you do this?

A. Yes! And from that hour to this, I have rejoiced in the blessing. Do you see how simple it really is?

B. I must confess I do not see it exactly as you do. Do I understand that you had not been living a consistent Christian life before you sought sanctification?

A. Well, I had been trying to do so, but found that my state was that described in Romans vii., "When I would do well, evil was present with me". I kept on sinning and repenting, struggling and trying, instead of fully surrendering and simply trusting.

B. I see; then your life was *not* really consistent. You say you laid your all on the altar when you claimed sanctification. How, and in what way did you do this?

A. I mean by that, I gave to God all my body, soul and spirit; all my talents, time, and possessions, for Him to possess and use them for time and eternity.

B. But what do you mean by saying you gave up your idols?

A. I had only one idol that I know of, for I was a total abstainer, and of course, as a Christian, had no desire for worldly amusements; but I was fond of my pipe, so I laid it on the altar of sacrifice.

B. So you considered your pipe to be an idol ?

A. Yes, I did, and therefore gave it up for the Lord.

B. Well, then, to sum the matter up, you were a believer, though not fully given up to the Lord ; trying to do right, but not very successfully ; and you came to the Lord and asked Him to deliver you from your sins, and give you power over them, while at the same time you re-dedicated yourself and all you had to the Lord, and believed that He accepted you and sanctified you. Am I right ?

A. Yes. And that is true holiness, brother.

B. I am afraid I can't quite agree with you.

A. What !

B. No, I fear that you do not understand what true holiness is. Shall I explain my meaning ?

A. By all means.

B. Then I'll begin at the beginning. First, as sin is the opposite to holiness, it would be well to ascertain what sin is. Here are two definitions from the Word of God :—" All unrighteousness is sin " (1 John v. 17). " Sin is the transgression of the law," that is, of course, of God's law (1 John iii. 4). Unrighteousness consists in doing that which is not right, either to God or man. By the transgression of God's law is signified the leaving undone what God has commanded us to do, or the doing of that which God has forbidden. Do you follow me ?

A. Yes, and I quite agree with you.

B. In one word, then, the transgression of God's law is *disobedience* to God, and that, says the Word of God, is *sin*. Now, if we look further into the Scriptures we shall find this fact fully supported. What was the sin of our first parents, which brought all the misery of man's fall into the world, but an act of disobedience? "For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. v. 19). God requires of man complete and implicit obedience to all His precepts. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). Are not they that disobey God, therefore, sinners?

A. Undoubtedly they are.

B. Then it follows, that since disobedience is sinful, the disobedient cannot be holy.

A. Quite right.

B. And if disobedience makes sinful, obedience makes holy.

A. Well,—yes, I suppose it is so. But I claim holiness through faith in the obedience of Christ. For "Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption".

B. It is true that Christ is all this, but in the words of James let me ask you, "What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him?" (James ii. 14).

A. Surely you are not contending for salvation by works?

B. I am not contending for anything that the Scripture does not teach. The question I have put is not mine, but an inspired Apostle's of Christ. James answers it by saying, "Faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James ii. 17). The Word of God therefore teaches that "faith is made perfect by works", that "faith without works is dead", and that our faith is to be "shown by our works" (James ii. 22, 17, 18). There is a great difference between seeking salvation or sanctification by works without faith, and seeking by faith which leads to, and is proved by obedient actions. Faith should go hand in hand with obedience, or of what use is it? It was the perfect obedience of Christ which saved us. He could say, "I delight to do Thy will, O God". And He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Philip ii. 8). By faith in Him, His obedience and merit are counted unto us for righteousness, and thus we are accepted with God.

A. Why, that's just what I say.

B. Yes, but remember that saving faith includes obedience. If a man says, "I believe in Christ", but his life is as vile and sinful as ever, will such miscalled faith save him? No! For as the Apostle James says, "The devils believe and tremble". Saving faith leads to action. He who truly believes in Christ, will repent of his sins, by God's grace forsake them, and will, seeking God's help, endeavour to obey every injunction and precept of the Lord's. Even so the man who desires to be

holy before God will prove his faith in Christ's obedience to be sound, by walking in His steps. We have no right to say, "I will depend wholly on the obedience of Christ, and therefore it is not necessary for me to be obedient. Christ gave Himself for me, and therefore I will give Him nothing. Christ 'worked the works of God', and therefore all I have to do is to stand idle in the market-place". Such talk and inaction, so far from pleasing God, would be unthankful and unholy. Hear what the Scripture says to the contrary:—"Let your light so shine before men that they may see *your good works*" (Matt. v. 16). "Be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. iii. 8). "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham" (John viii. 39). We are "workers together with" God (2 Cor. vi. 1). "His servants ye are to *whom ye obey*; whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness*" (Rom. vi. 16). The Gospel is "made known to all nations for *the obedience of faith*" (Rom. xvi. 26). "Elect . . . through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto obedience*" (1 Pet. i. 2). Christ "became the Author of Eternal salvation *unto all them that obey Him*" (Heb. v. 9). "Everyone that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3). "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). For Christ hath left us "an example that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21). Now, it appears to me, that you and a great many more of God's children

mistake what should be the beginning of holiness for the end.

A. In what way?

B. In this. You were quite right to dedicate your all to God's service, to give up to Him your will and your whole self, to ask His forgiveness for all your ups and downs, and to believe the promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". You took the right step when you did this, and no doubt you received the assurance of pardon and peace from so doing, even as I did.

A. I did, brother, and have it still.

B. But to stop there and go no farther is like a man going to a railway station and taking a ticket for a distant place which he makes no further effort to reach. "Let us," says the Apostle Paul, "go on unto perfection" (Heb. vi. 1). "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). How? By first laying the foundation aright of "Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, baptisms, the laying on of hands," belief in "the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment" (Heb. vi. 1, 2). Have you laid this foundation first?

A. Well, I have sincerely repented and believed the Gospel, and I believe in the resurrection and the judgment, but I don't see anything in the laying on of hands; and as for baptisms, I have got the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is all I need.



B. Ah! There you go at once. You want to build a perfect house on an imperfect foundation. What business is it of yours whether there is anything in the laying on of hands or not? Your business is not to judge God's word, but to *obey* it. Paul says this is a "doctrine of Christ," so if you wish to follow the teaching of Christ, you must obey, and remember that disobedience to God's word is sin. How can you, therefore be holy while you continue in the sin of disobedience? As for baptism, you will find that those very Hebrew saints to whom Paul was writing received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, not before, but *after* they had obeyed Christ's doctrine of baptism of water. Acts ii. 38, 41, tells us that at the very start of the Hebrew Church, when the convicted ones asked, "What shall we do?" Peter, "filled with the Holy Ghost," said unto them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." So it was at Samaria, and at Ephesus, where the believers were first baptized in water, and afterwards received the laying on of hands that they might be baptized with the Holy Ghost (Acts viii. and xix). There is only one instance in the New Testament of any person being baptized with the Holy Ghost *before* he was baptized in water, that of Cornelius and his fellow-disciples at Cæsarea; and this was an exception for Peter's sake, as Acts xi. 15-17 explains. But even in this case the Apostle Peter knew

God's way too well to permit them to build on a partial foundation ; so, although they had received the Holy Spirit, he said, " Can any man forbid *water* that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord " (Acts x. 47, 48). Thus you see, that supposing you to be the second exception to God's rule, you ought to be commanded to be baptized in water none the less, and God's word does command you.

A. Where does it say so ?

B. In Mark xvi. and Matt. xxviii., where our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gives the Gospel commission and command *for everyone who believes*. " Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned." And again, " Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ".

A. But may not that have meant the baptism of the Holy Ghost ?

B. I will answer you with another question. Can a man baptize another with the Holy Spirit ?

A. No. Only God can do that.

B. Then you see the answer ; for Christ commanded His disciples to baptize those who believed, and as they could not baptize with the Holy Ghost, it was water baptism that was commanded.

A. I see that plainly now. But if I am baptized with water and have the laying on of hands as Heb. vi. 1, 2, enjoins, how will that affect my sanctification ?

B. In this way. Disobedience is sinful ; perfect holiness is only attained through perfect obedience ; therefore, every step of obedience that the believer takes, makes him more like Christ, Who was perfect in obedience, and perfectly holy. It is only by obedience to God's way and will that we can " go on unto perfection ", or " perfect holiness in the fear of God ". We start on ' the King's highway of holiness ' by consecration ; we make progress as we conform to all God's will. The baptized believer is in that respect nearer to the likeness of the perfect Christ Who was Himself baptized, than the unbaptized one. The Christian who loves his enemies is nearer, in that respect, to perfection than the man who finds it beyond him and doesn't try by divine assistance to do it. It is not alone by baptism of water or of the Holy Spirit that we make spiritual progress towards perfection ; we must, by God's grace, endeavour to live *by every word of God*. But do not try to build without first laying the God-given foundation. Put first things first ; obey " the principles of the doctrine of Christ " (Heb. vi. 1), before you lay claim to the possession of His highest blessings.

A. I see then that what I thought was complete holiness was only the beginning, and a faulty one at that, because I have been a disobedient

child of grace, and therefore a sinful one. I remember, too, that Jesus said, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" I imagined I had given up all my will to the Lord, when I find I have all along been setting up my will against His word. Why, I haven't half loved the Lord as I thought I did, because He says, "He it is that loveth Me, that keepeth My sayings". I have been ready enough to trust in His obedience, while making it an excuse for my disobedience. My faith has not been of the right kind, for it has taken the place of actions instead of leading to them. God helping me, I'll start at once to lay a complete foundation according to the doctrines of Christ. Let us meet again, brother, for I long to hear more of God's way of blessing and holiness, which is so different from the way I have been taught by men.

B. With all my heart, brother, for I see you are an honest soul, desirous of knowing God's will better, that you may do it better. Of such our Lord has said, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17, R.V.).

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