

CALLED TO BE HOLY
Ephesians 1:4

Intro: The doctrine of election is clearly taught in the Word of God. It declares that, as in this verse, before the foundation of the world, the Lord sovereignly determined who would be saved. They were chosen for salvation.

Just as Paul was praising the Lord for this truth here in Eph. 1:4, he did the same in a letter he wrote some 10 years earlier: in 2 Thess. 2:13, 14:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you,
brethren beloved of the Lord,
because God hath from the beginning chosen you
to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit
and belief of the truth:

Whereunto he called you by our gospel,
to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
In these verses Paul spanned all of time, reaching from
eternity past to eternity to come.

While we can never fully understand the ways of God, yet the more we know of our own hearts, the more we will realize that it could not have been any other way, and we, too, will live our days praising the Lord that He has chosen us--appointing us to salvation BY HIS MARVELOUS GRACE!

And so, as we think of the doctrine of election, the Scriptures teach us that we should not only look backwards, or backwards and up to the time we were saved, but we should look to the future! GOD HAD A PURPOSE IN ELECTING US TO SALVATION. If we know the meaning of the word, salvation, we know that it not only has to do with being saved from the penalty of our sins, but it has to do with being saved from the power of our sins, and ultimately it will mean being saved from sin entirely!

Therefore, it is not surprising that Paul would write to the Ephesian church that God has chosen us "that we should be holy and without blame before him." (The words, "in love," probably belong to v. 5.) God is not only concerned about saving us from what we used to be and do, but He is concerned that we be something entirely different.

Now will you note that this is . . .

I. THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

As Paul said in Rom. 8:28, we are "the called according to his purpose."

It is important for us to understand this--that it is the

pre-ordained purpose of God. And the reason that it is important is because the purposes of God never do fail. Our purposes often fail, but God's--NEVER! His purposes are always achieved because they are dependent upon Him, and not upon us.

And so if God called us with that purpose in mind, we can rest assured that it will be done. This is very important for us to keep in mind, especially in those times when it seems so impossible that we will ever be even as holy as we would like to be. God will most certainly accomplish this purpose for every one whom He has called to salvation.

That fact that this is the purpose of God is indicated by the words, "that we should be."

But notice another thing about this verse.

II. THE MEANING OF HOLINESS.

Actually Paul used two words: "holy and **without blame** (the last two words are one word in the Greek.)

The first thing that we need to recognize about these words is that they mean:

A. That we will be like God!

God is a holy God. In fact, under the Law, and it is repeated in the NT, the Jews were told,
 For I am the Lord your God:
 ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves,
 and ye shall be holy;
 for I **am** holy.

Paul and John in the NT, and David in the OT, taught that we are going to be like Christ and like God. Cf. Psa. 17:15; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 John 3:1, 2.

Nothing should seem any more impossible than this--that God would call us, save us, and so transform us that we would become like He is. His holiness and ours are not different; they are the same. The only difference now is in the degree of holiness which we have attained. But when God's work in us is finished, "we shall be like him."

But let us clarify this subject of holiness a little more.

B. It means by definition that:

1. We have been set apart from the world, and set apart for God--for fellowship with Him! This means that we are sacred to God; we are what the NT calls, saints.

2. By definition it also means that there will be a moral purity about our lives--a God-likeness!

No longer will we be comfortable with the corruption of the world. We will no longer be satisfied to live like the people of the world. We will want to be pleasing to God.

3. In the language of the OT, we are "clean," which means that we are fit to be in His presence, and to have fellowship with Him. We have that standing immediately when we are saved, but it becomes more and more evident the longer we are saved.

C. The connection between our holiness and "without blemish before him."

"Before him." To whom does this refer? It seems to refer back to the One Who has chosen us. Who is that? It is the Father!

"Before him" is probably to be taken with the word "holy" as well as with the words "without blemish." And when we put it all together, we can see that our holiness will ultimately be such that God Himself will not be able to find one reason for disapproval when the work is finished.

Now, since that is the case, we ought to see that, in our concern to be holy, we need to be concerned only about that which is pleasing in the sight of God. Nothing else matters. People may ridicule us, but we are not out to please people--unless first of all it would be what is pleasing to the Lord.

Surely nothing should cause us greater amazement. This is the purpose of God, and it ultimately will be a permanent condition from which we can never be changed. We will no longer want to sin. No one will be able to tempt us to sin. We will be incapable of sinning. We will be like the Lord. This must be the first change that our loved ones are conscious of when through death they enter into the very presence of the Lord. They are not in their glorified bodies yet, but SIN IS DEFINITELY A THING OF THE PAST! We cannot even begin to imagine what that will be like.

But we need one further clarification about this holiness for which we have been chosen and called to the Lord:

III. THE TWOFOLD NATURE OF HOLINESS.

Holiness has its root in our hearts, and it has its manifestation in our behavior. It is both inward and outward. We do not become holy merely by trying to behave in a holy manner (although we do need to be concerned about a holy life). Holiness begins in the heart.

David learned this in a most tragic way. He undoubtedly knew this before his terrible sins involving Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, but it was indelibly impressed upon his heart by his sin.

Do you remember that part of his confessional Psalm (51) where he wrote,

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden part
thou shalt make me to know wisdom (v. 6).

David's son, Solomon, wrote,

Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).

The Lord Jesus said in words which most of us have been memorizing,

Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God (Matt. 5:8).

The Lord Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees with these words:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye make clean the outside of the cup
and of the platter,
but within they are full of extortion and excess
(Matt. 23:25).

True holiness has its roots in the heart. A person who tries to be holy outwardly, but is not concerned about holiness of the heart, is, as the Lord said, a hypocrite.

How easy it is to grow careless about our thoughts, or about the things that we read, or the things that we look at on television, or even at the magazine stands. Everywhere in this world we are faced with corrupting influences. How careful we need to be about what we are in the secret of our hearts before God. The writer of the 119th Psalm (v. 11) said,

Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.

Concl: Let me close with a warning.

If you are truly saved (are you?), then remember that it is God's unchanging purpose that you will be holy--holy inwardly and outwardly. And He is very patient and very gracious. But, if we continue to ignore the promptings of the Spirit of God in our hearts, then He will eventually resort to sterner measures.

This is one of the greatest reasons for a lack of peace. The Lord may take away our joy in reading His Word. You know the old saying,

This Book will keep you from sin,
or sin will keep you from this Book.

It often affects our fruitfulness and blessing in the work of the Lord. Sometimes He lets us see where our sin will take us, and great humiliation follows. This is what happened to David. There have been times when those very precious to us are removed by death because we have not listened to the Lord when He has spoken to us. Ananias and Sapphira died because their behavior was not holy.

If you can live a life of sin and are getting away with it, it might be an indication that you do not really belong to the Lord. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6). If you are saved, you must be holy. The Lord will not have it otherwise.

There are two OT prayers that we would do well to pray every day, providing we pray them from our hearts. The first is in Psa. 19:14:

Let the words of my mouth,
and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight,
O Lord, my strength (the word is, rock),
and my redeemer.

The second is in Psa. 139:23, 24:

Search me, O God, and know my heart:
try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Be thankful that this is God's certain purpose for you. And then pray and walk before Him that that purpose may be seen in the holiness of your heart and in the holiness of your life even now.

HOLINESS AND PRAYER

Psalm 19:12-14

Intro: The study of the prayers of the Bible is one of the richest and most rewarding of all of Scripture. This is the best way to learn how to pray. They are in the Bible not only to show us how others prayed, but as a pattern for our prayers.

We find long prayers, and we find short prayers. We have some of the prayers of the patriarchs, and the prayers of the prophets. We have some of the prayers of the apostles. Most importantly we have some of the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the prayers of men, and the prayers of women. We also have the prayers of young people. And there are all kinds of prayers: worship, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and personal requests. The longest book in the Bible could really be called a prayer book: THE PSALMS.

But one thing is significant about Bible prayers: MOST OF THEM, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, OFTEN VERY SPECIFICALLY, HAVE TO DO WITH HOLINESS!

That is always true where confession is concerned. That is true of those apostolic prayers where the burden of the Apostles was for the spiritual growth and vitality of the people they were praying for.

One soon comes to the conclusion that there can really be no holiness without prayer. Our very conformity to Christ, which is the whole purpose of our salvation, is to be sought and then manifested, by prayer.

So my subject tonight, Holiness and Prayer, would be much more appropriate for a book, than for a sermon--the possibilities for a text are almost inexhaustible.

But tonight I want to concentrate on a very familiar Psalm: the 19th.

Many of the Psalms start out like this one, where the Psalmist is speaking about the Lord, and then end by him speaking to the Lord. In this Psalm, not until we get down to v. 11 do we find the Psalmist speaking to the Lord. Perhaps he had been speaking to the Lord from the beginning, but it becomes apparent at that point. But from then on there is no question but that we are reading the words of a man, David the King, who was pouring out his heart to the Lord in prayer. V. 11 really shows what led to the words of supplication in the last three verses. It will be helpful for us to see what led up to the prayer in vv. 12-14, and then briefly examine the prayer itself.

I. THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD (Psa. 19:1-11).

Passages like this reveal one of the glaring faults of people today, and especially of the Lord's people. We do not spend time in thinking, in real meditation, the way we should. And if we do think, we are often thinking about the wrong things, or we do not have the guidance in our thinking that God has provided for us.

There is no higher way in which we can use our minds than in the contemplation of God--thinking about Him, learning about Him, enjoying His attributes, and seeking to understand His ways. We see from Scripture that the ways of the Lord with His people were always designed to turn their hearts, their thoughts, toward HIM! That was true of Abraham, of Joseph, of Moses, of David, of Job, of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Daniel, of John the Baptist, of Paul, of Peter, of John, and many, many others. Isaiah has given us a wonderful promise:

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee:
because he trusteth in thee (Isa. 26:3).

To stay our minds on the Lord is to turn our thoughts toward Him until we find ourselves trusting in Him, resting in Him. Turning our thoughts toward the Lord is the best way to have our faith strengthened.

I think you all will realize that what I have been saying is true. But how are we going to go about thinking of God and learning of Him?

Some people just strike out on their own, and you have many of the ridiculous ideas concerning meditation that we hear about today. But it is important for us to know that God has not left us to find our own way in this most important of all matters. He has provided us with guidance in two ways:

A. The first is in nature.

This is what David was giving expression to in vv. 1-6.

And yet when most people talk about the beauties of this world, their thoughts stop right there. When they talk about the weather, they talk about what "mother nature" is doing. They do not see what David saw, and so consequently they do not learn what he learned. He did not say that nature was God, but he said that nature reveals the glory, the majesty, the wisdom, the power, of God. Paul said the same thing in Rom. 1, and concluded that the evidence for the

existence of God in nature was so powerful that no man can honestly say that he does not know that there is a God.

As we enter into Spring here in Oregon, Psalm 19 ought to come to life for us. The wonders of God's handiwork are all around us, and each one witnesses to the existence and glory of God!

But this is not all. God has revealed Himself in a much clearer and much more specific way:

B. The second is the Word.

This is what David mentioned in vv. 7-11.

Notice those six statements about the Word in vv. 7-9, the work that is attributed to the Word, and the fact that with each one you have the little, but very important phrase, "of the Lord." The law is His. The testimony is His. The statutes are His. The commandment is His. The fear is His. The judgments are His. He is the One we see when we come to the Word. And you and I will experience all that David said in those verses if the Spirit is our Teacher.

David learned, too, according to vv. 10, 11 how precious the Word is, how valuable are its warnings, and what rich rewards come even now by living according to the Word.

But all of this led up to what we are primarily concerned about this evening:

II. DAVID'S PRAYER TO GOD (Psa. 12-14).

It should not be a surprising thing for us to read that all that preceded brought him to a new realization of his own sinfulness. And we see that he spoke to the Lord about "his errors," "secret faults." "presumptuous sins," and "the great transgression."

The daily contemplation of God will give us an entirely different picture of ourselves, a deeper sense of our need of God, how unlike the Lord we are, and not only what a need there is for us to be holy, but how we will long to be holy as God is.

And thus our prayers will change. And we will cry out to God that we might become all that He wants us to be. And you notice, as we learned last week, David came out of this realizing that it is not enough to be holy in our

outward behavior; we must be holy in our hearts--even in our thoughts.

As one has remarked, the Psalm begins with David's contemplation of the Lord as Creator, but ends with him crying out of the Lord as His Redeemer.

The contemplation of God increased David's vocabulary concerning sin.

Our "errors" are those things which follow upon our heels, the failings and infirmities to which we are all subject. We are baffled as to why we do them over and over.

Our "secret faults" are not things which we deliberately try to hide, but they are sins of the spirit and of the thoughts, not readily observable to the eyes of others.

David felt his need to be restrained from committing sins which he knew were sins when he committed them, presuming upon the forgiveness of God, and yet not hating them so as to forsake them.

"The great transgression" would be finally and completely turning away from the Lord, an apostate. Sin is so subtle, and we are so slow in recognizing our sins at times. David did not want to be one who merely claimed to be a child of God, and then found out in the end that he was not!

And so we see finally that he had two concerns:

- 1) His prayer indicated that only God could make him holy. That is why we need to recognize that there really can be no holiness without prayer.
- 2) Holiness is that which is "acceptable" in the Lord's sight. If it pleases Him, it is holy; if it does not please Him, it can never be holy.

Concl: Have you and I ever prayed like this? If we haven't, it is because we have never seen the Lord like David did. When we do, then we will cry out to God to enlighten us, to cleanse us, to restrain us, and to work in our hearts in such a way that we will be only concerned about that which is pleasing to Him. And this will bring us back to the Word.

HOLINESS AND CHASTENING

Hebrews 12:1-11

Intro: For the past two Sunday nights we have been looking into the subject of holiness. We started by learning from Ephesians 1:4 that that is the object of our election. We are chosen in Christ to be holy.

Last Sunday night we saw the connection between holiness and prayer. Prayer plays a vital part in our becoming holy, and, if we are to make progress in holiness, prayer must continue. Many Scriptures teach us that, but we used Psalm 19, especially vv. 12-14.

Holiness, of course, is sanctification. The object of God's sanctifying work is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. That work is going to be accomplished in all of us, but what we are learning is that God uses various means to accomplish it. Tonight I would like to consider with you the place that chastening has in this work of sanctification whereby the Lord is making us holy.

Chastening means, according to v. 9 in our text, correction. We learn about that from our childhood if our parents were doing what they were supposed to do as parents. They corrected us. They did it as it seemed best to them. Sometimes it was wise, but perhaps not always. But in the case of the Lord the correction is always wise, always needed, and always the right way to accomplish what He wants to accomplish in us: "our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (v. 10).

Two other words that the writer of Hebrews used to describe the chastening work of the Lord are the words "rebuked" (v. 5) and "scourgeth" (v. 6).

We are rebuked when we are shown to be wrong.

To be scourged is to be whipped.

We are chastened when we are disciplined, corrected. The word that is used here in vv. 5, 7, and 11 has to do with the bringing up of a child, the teaching, training that is necessary.

The object of all of this is the improvement of the child. A parent chastens his child to make that child what he ought to be. And the Lord has the same objective: "our profit." Whatever makes us more holy is profitable for us.

Think of a couple of the verses which we have been learning in the Sermon on the Mount: Matt. 5:27-30, esp. vv. 29, 30. (Repeat.) It is even profitable for us to lose a member of

our bodies rather than go on in a life of sin.

But let us look more closely at what the Word has to say about the chastening that the Lord uses in our lives. Originally this statement came from Solomon, and he wrote it out for his son. It is found in Prov. 3:11, 12:

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord;
neither be weary of his correction:
For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth;
even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

So this is truth which is not only NT, but it is OT. God has always seen fit to deal with His children in a chastening way, and we ought to be like Solomon in telling our children that this is what they can expect. It will help them when the time comes.

But what do we learn from this passage in Hebrews about chastening?

I. IT IS "OF THE LORD."

It is the Lord Who is doing the chastening. It is the Lord who decides what the chastening will be. It is the Lord who determines how long it will last, and when His purpose in that chastening has been accomplished. This is what always will give us peace.

The Devil may have a hand in it, as in the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Other people may be involved, as with David when he was pursued by Saul. Often, and perhaps most of the time, it is the result of our own doing. But the chastening is administered and controlled and completed by the Lord! It is that we are "rebuked of him."

Oh, how precious it is to know that our God has the whole thing in His hand. That is our comfort in our times of chastening.

But there is another thing that adds to our comfort:

II. CHASTENING IS AN EVIDENCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD FOR US.

See v. 6. And then look at v. 7. And then v. 8. A spiritual "bastard" is one who may think he is a son, but he is not! He is not real, not genuine.

Parents do not discipline all of the children they know, or may meet. They discipline their own children.

So it can be very comforting when we go under the discipline of God because it adds to our assurance that we are

really in the family of God.

On the other hand, when you see a person doing the wrong things, living the wrong way, and seemingly getting away with it, it ought to give them and us the occasion to wonder if he, or she, is really a member of the family of God. But God chastens us because He is not satisfied with what we are, or what we are doing, and He wants us to change, He wants to make us more holy.

But there is a third thing that I want you to see here:

III. ALL OF THE LORD'S CHILDREN ARE GOING TO BE DISCIPLINED.

It is not that some are chastened, and others are not. "The Lord . . . scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The OT rendering of "receiveth" is "in whom he delighteth."

And we never get beyond this.

When we grow up and move away from our parents' home, we are no longer under their discipline. But in the family of God it is different. We never get beyond the discipline of the Lord. The reason for this is that we are never all that we ought to be. And the older we get in the Lord, the more we know that this is true. The closer a person gets to the Lord, the more he sees his own need. And the more we get to be like the Lord, the more we recognize that we still have a long way to go.

Sometimes the Lord disciplines us because of things that we are doing. Sometimes, because of things we are NOT doing. Sometimes, a combination of both.

We are on our way to heaven. We are predestined to be like Christ. And so the Lord is continually working in our lives, perfecting that work, getting us ready for the glory that is to come.

But we are all disciplined because we all need it.

At this point let us think . . .

IV. SOME BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE CHASTENING HAND OF GOD.

There are many of them since this is something that every child of God experiences. So we have a lot to choose from.

A. Job.

Job is the one who experienced the most severe chastening of anyone I know of in Scripture or out of Scripture, with one exception which I will get to in a minute.

He lost his possessions, His servants, His family of ten children, and, finally, his health. The Lord took away everything but his wife and his life.

Fortunately this is not characteristic of the Lord's dealings, but many have suffered great losses at the hand of the Lord.

But, you say, "The Devil did it, not the Lord." That is not how Job felt about it. He said,
The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21b).

There is too much in that book for me to try to get into it tonight, but what was the purpose? It is very clear that, although by the Lord's own words Job was the holiest man alive, yet he needed to be made more holy. And that is exactly what the result was. If there ever was the expression of a holy man it is in what Job said to the Lord at the end:

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:
but now mine eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself,
and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:5, 6).

Take another example:

B. Abraham.

Abraham was like a lot of others in the Bible. And many of us, perhaps all of us, are to some extent like Abraham was. We want to see things happen NOW. Moses was like that. And so was David.

What did they all have in common? They were impatient.

Do you realize how impatience is a great enemy to the life of faith? And there is hardly anything that is more chastening to our souls than for nothing to be happening when we have reason to expect so much.

How we need to learn about the ways of the Lord from these men! Abraham had a child by Hagar because of this evidence of a lack of holiness in his life. Moses killed an Egyptian because he expected things to move right away.

So what happened to these men? Abraham had another 13 years to wait, and then he had the pain of sending Ishmael away after Isaac was born. Moses went into exile for 40 years to learn the ways of the Lord.

Let us be careful if we are inclined to be impatient with the Lord, and to go ahead of Him to do what we want to do even though He may be very clearly saying, "Wait!"

Let me take one example from the NT. I have already referred to it briefly:

C. PAUL.

And here I am thinking about his "thorn in the flesh." We do not know what it was. It may have been eye trouble, or it may have been something else. But whatever it was, Paul did not like it, and he wanted to get rid of it!

And so he prayed once, then twice, and then a third time--and then he got his answer. (And that, by the way, for our charismatic friends, is why Paul did not go on praying.) The Lord said, "No, I am not going to take it away."

Why?

There were two reasons:

- 1) Because the Lord did not want Paul's heart to be lifted up with pride because of the visions he had had.
- 2) Because the Lord wanted Paul to learn that God's grace would provide him with sufficient strength for even a heavy burden like that.

Now if we can learn those two things, we are making progress in holiness. Pride is distasteful to a holy man. And a holy man is one who trusts in the Lord instead of trusting in himself.

Let me give you an assignment for this coming week. In your Bible reading, or in your meditation on the Word wherever in the Bible it might be, think of the examples of the chastening of the Lord, and see what you can learn from them.

Now I have just two more things that I want to point out in our text tonight. The first is this:

V. OUR REACTION TO GOD'S CHASTENING.

There are four things to notice here.

A. "Despise" them "not" (v. 5).

This is a different word from the one in v. 2. There it means that the Lord did not even take His "shame" into consideration. Here in v. 5 it means that you and I are not to overlook it, but we are to give it our immediate and most careful attention. God is speaking to us when we are under His chastening hand, and we need to hear all that He is saying to us.

B. "Faint not" (v. 5).

The same word is in v. 3. (Read.)

This really means, "Don't give up." This is what Job's wife wanted to do, and I can't blame her because I have been ready to quit over trials I have had. But, you know, if you quit, that is because you are lacking the strength to see the trial through. And when you look to the Lord for strength, that is increasing in holiness!

C. We are to endure it. Cf. v. 7.

This same word is in vv. 2, 3. It means to hold out even after others have gone. It means to hold out, to await the outcome. And, in the meantime, continue on, persevere in doing what you can to be obedient to the Lord.

That is the Bible's description of a holy person.

D. Submit, reverence the Lord, stand in fear of Him. Cf. v. 9.

This has to do with the heart. Submission which is merely outward is not submission. A rebel can submit because he is forced to do it, but a truly submissive person will be quiet when he could do just the opposite.

All of these combined add up to holiness. To what extent do they describe you? Me?

Concl: Is the Lord dealing with you about something? It may not be a great issue that everyone knows about. In fact, you may be the only one who is aware that God's chastening hand is upon you.

If it is, don't ignore it, don't give up, keep persevering

with what you know is right, and ask the Lord to make you submissive to His will in your heart.

What will be the outcome? See vv. 10, 11. God loves you, and God's purpose is good--to make you holy as He is.

Our greatest Example and Source of help: the Lord Jesus Christ. See vv. 1-4. The OT saints may help you by their lives, but the greatest help we can possibly have is by "looking unto Jesus." May the Lord enable us to do it.

"THE LIGHT OF THE BODY"

Matthew 6:22, 23

Intro: Those of us who have been memorizing the Sermon on the Mount have been having a wonderful time of blessing. I have always enjoyed memorizing the Word, but I think that I have enjoyed this year's memory work more than any that we have had before. Perhaps it is because I have really needed the truths which the Lord enunciated in those three chapters of Matthew's Gospel: chapters 5, 6, and 7.

I have been struck with many of the verses, and hope to go back over them again and again. There is no question but that if we could appropriate the truth of these three chapters for our lives, we would be much different from what we are now. The Lord has given us in these three chapters a clear, comprehensive view of what it means to be a child of God. The more these verses are descriptive of us, the holier we will be, and the happier we will be. The Puritans, you know, put those two things together: holiness and happiness. And they did it because the Lord does it, and He has indicated this over and over again in the Word. Happiness is the fruit of holiness. And so, if you want to be happy, be holy, and you will be happy. The reason for this is that when we are just seeking to be happy, we are concerned about pleasing ourselves. But when we are concerned about being holy, we are concerned about pleasing the Lord--and then He gives us a kind of happiness that never diminishes.

Two verses which have really ministered to my heart are the verses which I have chosen as my text tonight: Matt. 6:22, 23. Let me read them for you. (Read.)

Some feel that the Lord was using "the eye" here to speak of generosity, on the one hand--the single eye, and covetousness, on the other hand--the evil eye. They interpret these verses that way because the Lord was speaking of money in vv. 19-21, and then He returned to the same subject in v. 23. Notice what He said in those verses.

It is true that these expressions were used this way in the OT. Cf. Deut. 15:9; Prov. 23:6; 28:22.

But even though this seems to fit the context, it seems to me that there is more than just money involved here. It is certainly true that money is involved, but my point is that it is not just money! And I say that because, when Luke quoted these sayings of the Lord, it was not in the context of talking about money at all. Cf. Luke 11:34-36. In the Luke passage the Lord was speaking about the way the people of Nineveh responded to the preaching of Jonah. Putting both the Matthew passage and the Luke passage together it seems that

the Lord was speaking about how we respond to outside influences, the eye being the organ of reception.

In Prov. 20:12 we have another verse which I think would apply to what the Lord said in the two verses of my text. This is what that verse says:

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,
the Lord hath made even both of them.

He made the ear for us to hear with, and He made the eye for us to see with. Both of these are instruments which can be used for the greatest good, or for the greatest evil. And the good and the evil describe the way they affect us. They will either be used to make us more holy, or they will be used to draw us into sin.

So our Lord was, first of all, enunciating . . .

I. A STATEMENT OF IMPORTANT TRUTH: "The light of the body is the eye."

We live in these bodies of ours. While holiness is not a matter of what we eat (as our Lord pointed out in Matthew 15:1-20, yet, in another sense, our bodies can be turned toward holiness by what we see and hear, or they can be turned toward sin.

Paul stated this in Romans 6. See vv. 11-14. We have the same truth in Romans 12:1, 2.

What are our "members" that are to be yielded to God, or which can be yielded to sin? They are our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our hands, and our feet. These, in turn, affect our minds (what we think about, and what we will to have), and our hearts (the things that we love, and want to have). "Yield" and "present" are the same verb in the original. I am not to make let the members of my body become members which would lead me into sin.

Now seeing this, the Lord has placed, in our text, a special emphasis upon the eyes. He was saying, in effect, your eyes have the capacity to fill your body with light, or they have the capacity to fill your body with darkness. Sometimes we try to do both--we put light in, and we put darkness in. But we find in such cases that the light becomes darkness, and the darkness is all the greater because we have been exposed to the light.

So we have . . .

II. TWO POSSIBILITIES.

Here they are:

. . . if therefore thine eye be single,
thy whole body shall be full of light.
But if thine eye be evil,
thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

A single eye is a good eye because it is feeding into the body that which is pleasing to the Lord. And evil eye is evil because it is doing just the opposite--feeding into the body that which is displeasing to the Lord. The eye feeds the mind and the heart--for good or evil.

Paul told the Colossian servants,
Servants, obey in all things your masters
according to the flesh;
not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;
but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord,
and not unto men (Col. 3:22, 23).

Now we are all the servants of God. Put that statement of Paul's into that kind of a context--addressed not just to servants, but to the servants of the Lord. "Singleness of heart" means that you are anxious to please the Lord whatever the circumstances might be--and that is all that you are interested in.

You see, the Ninevites repented because God had given them a heart to see the truth which Jonah was preaching. If we lay up treasure in heaven, our eye is good; if we lay up treasure on earth because that is our goal in life, that is evil. If I want to please God, that is good--a single eye. If I want to please myself, if I am just out to have a good time, that is evil--an evil eye.

Let me give you some Scripture illustrations:

1) Gen. 3:6.

2) Joshua 7:21.

On the other side cf.

3) Gen. 39:7-9. Although it had not been written as yet,
Joseph knew the truth of Prov. 15:3:

The eyes of the Lord are in every place.
beholding the evil and the good.

Joseph also knew the truth of Heb. 4:13:

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest
in his sight (the Lord's sight):
but all things are naked and open
unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

You can see that this is a truth that is very, very practical, one which we are involved in every day that we live.

Let me ask you, and I have been asking this of myself,
What are we letting into our bodies through our eyes?
What do you look at in a day's time? What are you reading?
What kind of magazines do you read? What kind of books do
you read? Do you know that these can do great damage to
your soul, and that they can and will affect how your body
is going to be used? What are you watching on TV? Do you
attend movies? If so, why, and what do you go to see?

If you see something indecent during the day, do you
continue to look at it, or do you turn away? Is
pornography a problem to you?

On the other hand, what are you doing to feed your soul
through your eyes? Do you watch and admire and follow the
example of godly people? Are you faithful in reading the
Word? What good book have you read during the past month,
or are you reading now? Are you hiding the Word of God in
your heart? Our Bibles were written for us to see, and to
read, and to remember, and to obey.

Is your heart filled with an earthly ambition for a
position, or for money, or for things?

Does this verse describe you?

While we look not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen:
for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal
(2 Cor. 4:18).

Paul wrote these words also:

If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
Set your affection on things above,
not on things on the earth.
For ye are dead,
and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).

How are you using your eyes? There are only these two
ways. Make sure that in what seems to be a little matter
like this you are really seeking to please and obey God.

But I have one more point:

III. A DREADFUL PROSPECT: "If therefore the light that is in
thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

The Lord was speaking to those to whom He had given light,
wonderful light. He had given them His Word. They had
seen the light.

NOW THE BIG QUESTION WAS: WHAT WERE THEY GOING TO DO WITH IT? Would they close their eyes to it? Would they try to mix it with the darkness that was within, or would they set their hearts on having the light drive out the darkness. Responding to the light brings greater light; rejecting the light, or even ignoring the light, turns the light into darkness, and then!!! "HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS"!

Concl: I am fully persuaded in my own mind that more damage is done to us spiritually than we realize because we either reject the light, or we try to mix the light we have with the darkness of sin that is already in our hearts. We do not get rid of the darkness that way. Our darkness only becomes that much darker until it consumes our whole being.

The Word of God tells us what needs to go on in our hearts, but it also warns us about what may be going on this very night. Where do you stand? Do you fear the Lord? Do you love Him so much that you would rather please Him than to do anything else? That is the only safe route to go. May God enable all of us to do that which is pleasing in His sight!

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST
Hebrews 10:1-18

Intro: For several Sundays, in the evenings, we have been considering the subject of holiness. We have seen:

- 1) that we have been called to be holy.
- 2) that there is a vital connection between prayer and holiness.
- 3) that through chastening we are made partakers of God's holiness.
- 4) that holiness is a very practical matter having to do with the way we use the members of our bodies, particularly our eyes.

Tonight I want to talk about holiness from more of a doctrinal standpoint, and my text is in Hebrews 10.

We all need to know that when we are talking about holiness we are talking about the doctrine of sanctification. To be sanctified is to be made holy. And, since we know from Scripture that there is none who is holy but God, we come to our definition of sanctification. It is to be "put into a state corresponding to the nature of God" (Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon and Concordance, p. 660). To state it another way, to be holy is to be made like God. This is the purpose of our salvation. The ultimate purpose of our redemption is that we will be like Christ. And so perfect holiness is glorification.

And so holiness and sanctification and perfection are three words used synonymously in the Scriptures. It is God's will for us that we be a holy people. Paul said this in 1 Thess. 4:3,

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.
 And then he added in v. 7 of the same chapter,
 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness,
 but unto holiness.

Now we are ready to understand the first verse of Hebrews 10.
 (Read.)

God's purpose in OT times was the same with regard to salvation as now, in NT times. The object of His saving grace has always been, sanctification, holiness, perfection. You will remember that the Lord told the Israelites through Moses,

For I am the Lord your God:
 ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves,
 and ye shall be holy; for I am holy . . . (Lev. 11:44).

Some of us have been learning the Sermon on the Mount. One of our verses has been this:

Be ye therefore perfect,

even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect
(Matt. 5:48).

The object of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was to make the people of God a holy people. Do you want to know how holy people live? Read the Sermon on the Mount. It is our Lord's portrayal of Himself (except in those passages where He spoke of our sin), and it is the picture of a holy child of God. There we see (at least in part) what it is to be like our Lord--and so to be holy.

And so we have a responsibility in holiness, and the people of God in the OT had a responsibility in sanctification, and that is (and was) in our (and their) obedience to the Word of God. But sanctification is not a work that we do for ourselves. SANCTIFICATION IS A WORK OF GOD. And that work of perfecting the people of God into the very likeness of God could never have been accomplished in OT times by the sacrifices of the OT. We have the pattern of sanctification there, but the pattern in itself was not the answer.

That is what makes the doctrine of the Cross of Christ in the NT so very, very important. All of those sacrifices pointed ahead to the infinitely greater sacrifice of Christ, and they were of value only as they represented Christ in His death.

But now I want you to notice a problem. It seems that it might be a contradiction.

I can best express it by the expression,

I. SANCTIFIED, AND BEING SANCTIFIED.

If you are taking notes, this is my first point. I almost used this as my subject: SANCTIFIED, AND BEING SANCTIFIED.

How can it be said that we are sanctified, and yet at the same time we are being sanctified? The first means that we are sanctified right now; the other means that the process of sanctification is still going on.

I would certainly prefer the second term. It is amazing enough to be able to say that I am being sanctified, but I am not at all ready to say that I already am sanctified. I am too conscious of the many ways in which I am not as holy as the Lord is.

Look at these two expressions in verses 10 and 14, and I am going to read them from the NKJV which brings out the meaning of the original text a little more clearly.

Verse 10 in the NKJV reads like this:

By that will **we have been sanctified**

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This means that right now every believer in Christ is sanctified. We are now holy. We are now perfect.

But verse 14 reads like this:

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

This indicates that the work is still going on in the lives of all believers.

And so one verse says that is already finished; the other says that it is being finished. Which is right?

THEY BOTH ARE!!! You see, one describes what we are right now before God; the other describes what we are here in this world. People do not see us as fully sanctified, but God does.

Now, just so you will see that I am not off on a tangent, let me call your attention to some verses which teach both.

II. SANCTIFICATION ACCOMPLISHED.

In Paul's salutation to the first epistle to the Corinthians, he said this:

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth,
to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus . . .
(1 Cor. 1:2).

How significant this is appearing in this epistle since the Corinthian church was anything but a holy church. But they were already "sanctified in Christ."

Take another verse--and this also appears in 1 Corinthians, 6:11. After reminding them of what they used to be, he wrote this:

And such were some of you:
but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified,
but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,
and by the Spirit of our God.

When Paul wrote to the Roman church, in the passage I am thinking of, he did not use the word sanctified, but he used the word glorified, which makes this all the more wonderful. Listen to these familiar words from Rom. 8:30:

Moreover whom he did predestinate,
them he also called,
and whom he called, them he also justified;
and whom he justified, them he also GLORIFIED.

Paul could say this because in God's sight the work was finished. It was accomplished. IT WAS GUARANTEED BY THE WORK OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS TO THE EXTENT THAT IT COULD

NOT FAIL TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE CASE OF EVEN A SINGLE CHILD OF GOD. If we are now glorified in the eyes of God, then obviously we are also sanctified.

That is what Heb. 10:11-14 says, isn't it? Note:

- 1) "Once for all" in v. 10--never needing to be repeated, completely successful in every case!
- 2) "For ever" in v. 12.
- 3) "For ever" in v. 14.

Where could we find more glorious truth than that? Here is the ground of our assurance.

But now look at the other side of sanctification because, since one side of this doctrine is true, we know that the other is also. Both are taught in Scripture.

III. SANCTIFICATION INCOMPLETE, BUT INCREASING.

We are not yet, in a personal and practical sense, holy, but we are to be making progress in that direction.

Let me take you to a passage I quoted for you in the morning service today: 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

Another passage is in Rom. 6:11-14, 19.

Look also at the question in Rom. 6:1. The assurance of our present sanctification in God's sight, and our future sanctification when we are with the Lord, do not make us careless about sin, but because great incentives for us to forsake sin and to seek to be holy in the smallest details of our everyday lives.

Concl: What can be my exhortations after looking at such truth?

Let me mention three things:

- 1) How we need to praise God for that which He has guaranteed for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His work for us on the Cross! How long has it been since you mentioned the death of the Lord to the Father in prayer?
- 2) Here is our assurance of salvation in all of its fulness. Believe it, and rest in it!
- 3) Let us give ourselves to the work of sanctification in our own souls. This means prayer. This means hearing the Word. This means obeying the Word. This means meeting with the Lord's people regularly, and finding our place at the Lord's Table.