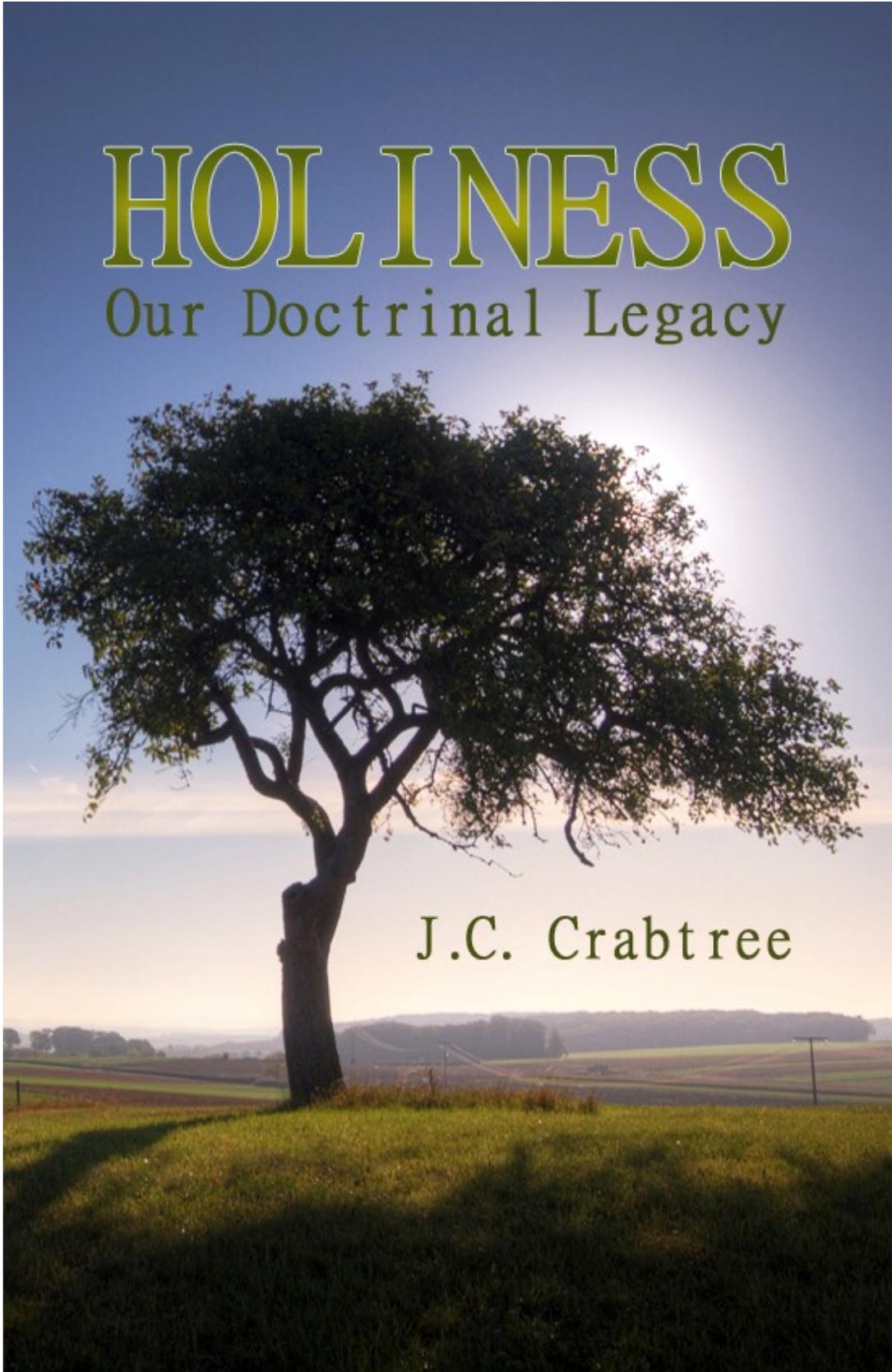


HOLINESS

Our Doctrinal Legacy

J.C. Crabtree



HOLINESS
OUR DOCTRINAL LEGACY

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BY MY SPIRIT

There is a portion of scripture pertinent to the power-crazy age in which we live. It is found in Zechariah 4:6 *“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts.”*

INTRODUCTION

It is hardly necessary that I remind you we are living in an age of matchless might. Truly, this is a period of unprecedented power. Mental giants are stalking the land everywhere. The unexcelled wisdom of science, psychology and technology marches onward without any competition. With awkward movement this world crawled out of the Stone Age into the machine age. Feeble strides marked the machine age and then almost overnight this world took a startling leap into the nuclear age. Since that fantastic moment, this world has been soaring on supra jet power toward limitless goals. It appears in our day the hackneyed expression, “the sky is the limit” has been disproved. The world’s foremost scientists met in March 1954 and predicted space travel to the nearby planets in this century. It looks like they are well on their way. We have laughed at the legend of the man in the moon. These same scientists have now placed a man on the moon. I know to some this seems to be incredible. But may I remind you it was but a few short years ago the whole world laughed at the Wright brothers and their flying machine, but today at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, they have some supra jet planes streaking across the heavens faster than the speed of sound, breaking the sound barrier, shattering windows and nerves for miles about.

Intellectually speaking, this is the age of MATCHLESS MIGHT. The lamp of learning is burning brightly in every corner of the world. While this is true, there are some who prefer the darkness of stupidity, insisting ignorance is bliss. In this enlightened age of education, it is possible to live within walking distance of the university and be as illiterate as a cannibal in the jungle.

SCIENTIFICALLY speaking, this is an age of matchless might. Timesaving gadgets, labor-saving devices on every hand, and yet we have never had a civilization that had less time or was any more exhausted.

I am convinced, according to Scripture, this is preeminently the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. While this is true, all about me I see Christendom awkwardly struggling on under her own feeble efforts, refusing to accept the spiritual power provided by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. I am further convinced the entire spiritual decline in the church today is due to the fact that the church has more confidence in the world and the flesh than in the power and preeminence of the Holy Spirit.

My evangelistic labors have taken me to the larger cities of the nation where we have several churches. I go to a church in a large city and the membership rallies to the call of revival. They carry burdens, pray intercessory prayers, bring new people and see them saved and sanctified and join the church. The revival is rated as a great success. After a few months of time, I go back to the same city, across town to another church, and only a fraction of the church membership even bothers to attend the revival. No concern. No burdens. No praying. No new people are brought in. No conversions. The revival must be regarded as a failure. Now, how can you account for the difference of these two churches in the same city? It is not a difference of location, or

buildings, or finance, or talent. The difference? One church has learned to rely upon the Holy Spirit, while the other church is content to rely upon man-made methods, resorting to human brilliance. I am convinced this is the concern of the Prophet who said, ***“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts.”***

The Prophet said it’s not by might. It is not by MENTAL might. We are now living in a day when much emphasis is being placed upon the mentality of man. But a wise man who has probably forgotten more than we will ever know has advisedly said, ***“Trust in the Lord with all of thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding.”*** Now, if mental might would have accomplished the salvation of this lost world, then all of the seminaries, colleges and universities would be centers of Holy Ghost revivals. But you know that is not the case. Instead, these same educational institutions are the breeding spots for atheism, agnosticism, and liberalism, going so far as to deny the authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, the deity of Christ, the virginity of Mary, the depravity of man, the personality of Satan, the reality of hell and the reward of heaven. We have learned with much disappointment the ministry that is college-trained but not Spirit-filled is doomed to failure every time. There is no amount of education, talent, travel, or charisma that can act as a substitute for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. These are days when church members are fond of traveling pleasure, but few can be found who will travail in prayer. I suppose a trip to the Holy Land would be informative for all of us, but I am convinced what the church needs is a trip to the upper room. She needs to tarry there on her knees until she has been endued with power from on high. The brief, but orthodox creed, “I believe in the Holy Ghost” needs to descend from man’s head and get into his heart.

Dr. Robert G. Lee, princely Baptist preacher was addressing the Southern Baptist Convention and said, and I quote, “It is high time the church learned to follow fools on fire for Christ rather than scholars on ice.” He was not putting down education when he made that statement. He has several of the highest doctorate degrees behind his name, but he has learned after all of the educational pursuits, ***“It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts.”***

It seems to me if anybody would have been qualified for the task of soul winning, the disciples would have been. They walked in the footsteps of the Master Teacher; namely, Jesus. He was knowledge and truth personified, but time and time again Christ had to remind His followers there was a lack in their life. Not until they received the upper room experience did they do anything worthwhile in the Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul ranked high among the intelligence of his day, but not until his intellect was intensified by the fire of the Holy Spirit did he do anything that was effective in the Kingdom of God. The greatest lesson Paul had to learn was to unlearn what he had already learned. Don’t miss that! Few people learn this lesson in a lifetime. Let me go over that again. The greatest lesson Paul had to learn was to unlearn what he had already learned. Paul couldn’t understand why an Omnipotent, Omniscient God had to stoop to the stigma, shame and weakness of a blood-splattered cross to save this lost world. When Paul got his eyes open, he saw the preaching of the cross was foolishness to them that perish, but life everlasting to those that believe.

Paul discovered God is using five things to save this last world.

1. He discovered God is using foolish things to save the lost. It is written, ***“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*** Now please notice, he did not say it pleased God by the foolishness of programming, contesting, recreating, socializing or entertaining. It reads, ***“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”***

2. Paul has discovered God is using weak things to save this lost world. It is written, ***“God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.”*** The Scripture says, ***“The weakness of God is stronger than men.”***

3. Paul discovered God is using base things to save the lost. The things that are lowly and unwanted; that is what God is using to save this lost world.

4. Paul discovered God is using despised things to save the lost. The things that are cast off and shunned, God is using to save the perishing.

5. Paul discovered God is using the things which are not to bring to nothing the things which are. I’m not so certain I know what all that means, but I do know this much...God is using it because the Bible says so. Now the carnal mind in arrogance says, “Why will an all-powerful, all-wise God stoop to use foolish things, weak things, base things, despised things, things which are not to save this lost world?” Paul sums it up in one statement when he said, ***“That no flesh should glory in His presence.”*** Proud flesh is the stumbling block standing in the way of the salvation of this lost world.

The Prophet said, ***“Not by might.”*** It is not by MATERIAL might. We will have to recognize God has blessed the church, materially speaking. We have made a lot of progress since our primitive beginnings. I speak of the church in a general sense. We used to meet in dimly lighted storefront rooms for worship. Now we have our beautiful sanctuaries. We used to walk down the sawdust trail. Today we have wall-to-wall carpet. We used to come in and sit down on splintered wooden benches. Today we have the cushioned pew. We used to start the song service with the banjo. Now we have the piano. The organ has taken the place of the harmonica. The choir used to meet at one end of the meetinghouse on folding chairs, dressed in denim jeans and cotton dresses with everybody singing the same part. Now we have our centrally located choir lofts. In the hot summertime, we used to cool ourselves with a cardboard fan donated by the mortician that was looking for business. Today we have comfortable air conditioning systems. I might add the tithing envelope and the budget system is a remarkable improvement in the church. For you see, the early church didn’t have much money. I remember reading where two preachers from the early church were walking to the meetinghouse. They passed a stranger along the way that asked them for money. Rev. Peter said, ***“Silver and gold have I none – but such as I have give I thee.”*** (Now that is heartfelt experience). Peter said, ***“In the name of Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”*** The man regained strength to his anklebones. He jumped to his feet and carried on most foolishly. He went running and leaping off to the meetinghouse with these holiness preachers.

We have the money today, but do we have the spiritual power and experience to say to the needy along the highway of life, ***“Such as I have give I thee. In the name of Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”?*** These are days when church denominations are raising dollars by the multiplied millions, but saving souls by the meager dozens. I am not suggesting we go back to the old storefront room with its inconveniences. I believe God has prospered the church to put us in better position to save the lost community. But, my heart aches for the charter members who yearn for the good old days of revival in the storefront building when the crowds came, people were saved and sanctified, and the glory descended when they testified, and the preaching was punctuated with loud “amens”. But the difference is not in the buildings. The difference is in our hearts. The same manifestation of the Spirit that graced the “old glory barn” our founder, Dr. Phineas Bresse preached in, will also grace our beautiful sanctuaries when our people are

yielded completely to the Spirit of the Lord.

The Prophet said, ***“It is not by might.”*** It is not by MILITARY might. I have derived the term military from the Hebrew text. It literally reads not by army. When I think of the army, I think in terms of the military. When I think of the military, I think of vast numbers. Napoleon one time said, “God is on the side of the biggest army.” Napoleon was probably a good soldier. I won’t dispute that. But, he would have made a poor preacher. God is not necessarily on the side of the biggest church denomination or the largest church membership. God is not impressed with our numbers. Too often we have been worshipping at the shrine of statistics. But there is no truth or strength in church statistics. Too often they reveal our weaknesses. To illustrate, Gideon pastored a large church, as it were. He had 32,000 members. Now that is a large church. The Lord said, ***“Gideon, call your members together and serve notice on them what it takes to have revival and then tell all the cowards that are not willing to pay the price to break ranks and skedaddle for home.”*** Would you believe it? Gideon had to write out 22,000 church letters without the aid of a secretary or a copy machine. Now his big church is depleted to a meager 10,000 members. That’s all he had left; just 10,000 members. The Lord sees our weakness when we do not. The Lord said, ***“Gideon, I want you to take the 10,000 members down to the brook and put them to the test”.*** There were a meager 300 members that passed the test. Percentage wise, times haven’t changed much. We have reached the day when there is a true church within the professed church. They are known as the Master’s minority...the faithful few. The Lord said to take the faithful band of 300 and get some pitchers, lanterns and trumpets. What foolish and weak things to win a battle. Gideon said, ***“I want you to take the lanterns; place them in the pitchers. In the darkness of the night, surround the enemy. At a given signal break the pitchers, hold up the lanterns. (Let your light shine). Blast out with the trumpets and shout out the sword of the Lord and Gideon.”*** He did not say “the church and the Lord.” The Lord must be first and given preeminence if we are to be victorious. You know the rest of the story. They chased all of the Midianites, the enemy of the Lord, out of the country.

Also, the Prophet said, ***“It is not by POWER.”*** It is not by PHYSICAL power. How much physical energy is being expended in a needless way in a vain attempt to advance the Kingdom of God? For too long the church has contented itself with a choice corner lot in the city while there are communities and continents waiting to hear the message of full salvation.

Also, the Prophet said, ***“It is not by POWER.”*** It is not by PHILOSOPHICAL power. One of the branches of philosophy is logic. Logic is similar to the mathematical procedure whereby, through a syllogism, you arrive at a conclusion from a given premise. Some of this philosophical logic has influenced the evangelism in the church. To illustrate, a guilty sinner comes to the church for the purpose of getting saved. He hears the minister preach, they sing a hymn of invitation. He hurries down the aisle to the altar. After much persuasion on the part of the pastor, a few members come to the front to pray with him. They recite their one familiar prayer and retire to the front pew. An impatient altar worker with one eye on the clock and the other eye on the progress of the seeker realizes if he is going to get home in time to see his favorite television program, he will have to hurry this process up. He gets his Bible and kneels in front of the seeker and he says, “My friend, do you believe this Bible is the Word of God?” That is a logical question, and the answer will be “yes”. Why do you suppose he is in church? Of course, he believes that. He then turns to John 3:16 and hurriedly quotes it. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*** The altar worker says, “Do you believe that ‘whosoever’ included you?” That is a logical question. You will get a “yes” answer. Why do you suppose he came to the altar?” The altar worker moves forward to a conclusion, and he says, “My friend, on the basis of God’s Word, you are now saved.” No time given for the seeker to exercise genuine repentance,

without which no man can be saved. No time allowed to bringing the man to a willingness to make restitution. The man gets up, disappointed, with the same condemnation he had before kneeling at the altar. He leaves the church disappointed and never returns. Do you remember when and where you were saved? I remember where I was saved. I maintain if people really get saved, they will come back to the church where it happened.

“It is not by POWER.” It is not by PSYCHOLOGICAL power. Originally, psychology could have been a help to the ministry and the church. Let me explain the meaning of the word. It is a composite of two Greek words; namely, “psyche” which means soul, and “logos” which means word. Therefore, psychology was meant to be a study or word about the soul of man. But contemporary psychology has taken the soul out of man. Man is regarded as an empty shell. They say sin doesn’t exist. Your moral behavior is determined by your inherited tendencies. Therefore, if you mess up your life, you can blame your father. If your father has an excellent behavior record, then you must blame your grandfather. If he passes the character test, the conclusion is that the problem is somewhere in the genealogy of your ancestry. Psychoanalysis cannot resolve your sin problem. There is only one remedy for sin. It is repentance. Jesus said, ***“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”***

The Prophet said, ***“It is not by might.”*** That is negative. ***“Nor by power.”*** That is negative. Two-thirds of the text is negative. How often the critic is heard to say, “Ministers should not preach negatives.” If you heed that criticism, that would eliminate the Ten Commandments. ***“Thou shalt not kill (murder), thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, etc.”*** Who would agree to omit the preaching of these commandments? You can’t enjoy the “positives” in God’s Word unless you employ the “negatives”. After all, before we can learn how it is done, we must learn how it is not done.

The Prophet said, ***“Not by might, nor by power.”*** Then he proceeds to the positive and says, ***“but by my Spirit says the Lord of Hosts.”***

Bishop Wilson T. Hogue said, ***“The Holy Spirit is the executive of the Godhead.”*** Because we are now living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, everything we do in the Kingdom of God must be done in and through the Spirit. Otherwise, God will reject it as being unacceptable.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our salvation. Jesus confirms this. John 3:3, He said, ***“Ye must be born again of the Spirit.”*** Your physical birth into this world did not make you a citizen in the Kingdom of God. To gain entrance as a citizen in the Kingdom of God, ***“You must be born again of the Spirit.”*** Ephesians 2:19 says, ***“Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”*** Because we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, this qualifies us for citizenship in heaven hereafter.

The Holy Spirit is the sufficiency of our sanctification. I Corinthians 6:11 says, ***“We are sanctified by the Spirit of God.”*** In contrast to being gradual, sanctification is an instantaneous act, separate from and subsequent to, the experience of being born again of the Spirit. To qualify for being sanctified holy, first you must have been born again of the Spirit. It cannot be shown in scripture where a sinner has been sanctified holy by the Spirit.

The sufficiency of our sanctification extends to the eradication of the sin nature inherited from the fall of Adam. Just to reinforce the use of the word eradication Romans 6:6 says, ***“The body of sin is to be destroyed.”*** The Greek word for destroyed is annihilation.

The Holy Spirit is the success of our service in the Kingdom of God. Everything we do in the

Kingdom of God must be done in the Spirit.

We are to preach in the Spirit. Paul said, ***“My preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in the power and demonstration of the Spirit.”*** We are to pray in the Spirit. Paul said, ***“We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us.”*** Paul said, ***“We are to pray always with all prayers and supplications in the Spirit.”*** We are to witness in the Spirit. Jesus said, ***“The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and ye shall be my witnesses.”*** We are to testify in the Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. We are to sing in the Spirit. Paul said, ***“Be filled with the Spirit, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*** Even the board meeting is to be conducted in the Spirit. At the Council of Jerusalem in the early church, after they made their decisions, they said, ***“It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit.”*** Only as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit can we succeed in the service of the Kingdom of God. ***“For the manifestation of the Spirit is given to all to profit withal.”***

PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB

Scripture Reading....Matthew 13:15

INTRODUCTION

Please, do not disturb! That sign hanging on the doorknob of a room in a small hotel was blamed for the fiery death of the occupant. The man had driven many miles. He arrived at the hotel at a late hour. He registered for a room; then he told the desk clerk he was very tired and did not want to be disturbed for any circumstances. The desk clerk handed him a sign which read, "PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB". He told the man to hang it on the door and nobody would bother him. The man immediately retired to the room. Shortly thereafter, a fire broke out. The desk clerk rushed up and down the halls banging on the doors and shouting, "Fire! Fire!" He came to this man's door. There was the sign, "PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB". He rapped loudly on the man's door and screamed "Fire!" A grouchy voice on the inside answered, "Go away! Can't you read the sign?" The desk clerk ran to other areas of the hotel to make sure everybody was getting out. He intended to go back to the man's room, but the flames were rolling down the corridor. He could not reach the man's room. The holocaust gutted the hotel. The man's charred remains were found the next day. The local newspaper commented on the tragedy. They said either the man was not sufficiently awakened or perhaps he thought a prankster was playing a joke because the sign was on the door, "PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB".

MERCIFUL PICTURE OF CHRIST

One of the most merciful and compassionate word pictures of Jesus Christ is seen hanging in *Revelation 3:20*. You have probably seen the artist's conception of it. It reads, "***Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice, I will come in to him.***" This is more than a picture in past history. It is the present ministry of our Lord to this day. For *Matthew 18:11* says, "***The Son of Man is come to save that which is lost.***" He came knocking at the heart's door of the people represented in this scripture. By their attitude, they hung the sign on the door of their hearts. "DO NOT DISTURB". As a tragic consequence, Christ indicated they could not be converted. When you assume this attitude against the Spirit of the Lord, a process of DEGENERATION begins to erode your soul like a deadly cancer. What is meant by DEGENERATION? It is the exact opposite of regeneration. It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to regenerate every soul that comes into the world. *Titus 3:5* says, "***Not by works of righteousness we have done but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.***" But – when you refuse to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, DEGENERATION begins to destroy your soul. PROCRASTINATION is the perilous process that leads to the DEGENERATION of the soul. What is meant by procrastination? Simply postponing, putting off, delaying the time of making things right with God. Neglect is the starting point of degeneration. God's Word says, *Hebrews 2:3* "***How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?***" I hasten to tell you there is no escape if you neglect so great salvation. Degeneration makes its inroads upon every form of life.

PLANT LIFE

It makes its impact upon plant life. Suppose you plant a garden of strawberries and roses; then just leave it alone. In a few years, it will waste away. I don't mean it will waste away into nothingness. The strawberries will degenerate into the dog roses you find in the hedges. Why does this happen? Because when you remove the influence of cultivation, they degenerate into something lower and something worse.

Soloman puts the perils of degeneration in picturesque words. He said, *Proverbs 24:30*, "***I went***

by the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down.” What happened to this garden? Why is it all grown over with thorns and nettles? Did a pestilence strike it? No! Why is this stone wall broken down? Did a cyclone hit it? No! What happened to this garden? I can tell you what happened to it. Neglect! Neglect! The garden, which Solomon saw, describes the degeneration of the soul.

ANIMAL LIFE

Degeneration makes its impact upon **animal life**. Suppose you release a domesticated dog to run with the wild coyotes of the West or the timber wolves of the North. In due time that domesticated dog will turn into a wild, ferocious beast. Why? The influence of **domestication** has been removed so the dog degenerates into something lower and something worse. Newspapers have given accounts of wild packs of dogs attacking people.

Man is no exception to the deadly law of degeneration. For instance, suppose a man neglects his **body**. He will become an invalid. Suppose a man neglects his body to the extreme. He will become like some of the dehumanized savages occasionally found on desolate islands.

Suppose a man neglects his **mind**. It will degenerate into stupidity, ignorance, and feebleness. Solitary confinement has the power to disorient the minds of men and leave them as idiots.

Suppose a man neglects his **conscience**. It will degenerate into lawlessness until he can no longer discern between right and wrong. This explains why some church members can indulge in wrong and still insist they are right with God. The conscience has degenerated until they can't feel the difference.

Suppose a man neglects his **soul**. It will degenerate into hardness, ruin, eternal death, and everlasting damnation. Hence the absolute meaning of *Ezekiel 18:4 which reads, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* Think about that for a moment. A dead soul! A dead soul! You know exactly what I mean when I speak of a dead body. A dead body cannot respond in any way. The coroner confirms this. Now think with me. A dead soul! It cannot respond to God in any way. It is dead in the absolute sense. Now you are intelligent. You are following this principle of truth. I want to ask you some questions. How can the **garden** escape turning into weeds and waste if you neglect it? How can the **dog** escape running into wildness if you neglect it? How can your **soul** escape degenerating into hardness, ruin, eternal death and damnation if you neglect it?

FANATICAL MONK

A fanatical monk in Europe took a solemn vow he would not speak a word for fifty years. This was not an uncommon practice with this religious cult. He faithfully kept that vow. When the fifty years expired, he attempted to speak and couldn't utter a sound. His vocal chords had degenerated. He lost his voice, not because he abused it. He lost his voice because he **neglected** to use it. This brings to mind again *Hebrews 2:3, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”* To lose your soul to hell, all you have to do is nothing. Nothing! Just do nothing about your soul and you will lose it.

BIOLOGISTS

Biologists have caught a certain species of fish that are content to dwell in the midnight depths of Kentucky Lake. These fish never come to the surface. They refuse to come to the light. They prefer to stay in the darkness. They discovered these fish have eyes that appear to be normal, intact just like other fish, but to their horror, they discovered the fish are blind. They can't see a

thing. They operated on the eyes of some of these fish. Back behind the eye that appeared to be normal, the optic nerve was a mass of shriveled up ruins. God, the Creator said, ***“If they are not going to function their eyesight and come to the light; if they are going to stay in the darkness, then take their eyesight from them.”*** This illustrates the people in the text. *Verse 15 “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, a mass of shriveled up ruins, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at anytime they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted.”* Here is a class of people, according to Christ, who cannot be converted. Why? Because they jumped up in the temple with clenched fists, waving their arms to heaven, blaspheming the Holy Spirit? No! Well, why can’t they be converted? They closed their eyes to the light of God’s Word. They stopped their ears to the truth; they hardened their hearts to the striving of God’s Spirit, and now they can’t see God; they can’t hear God; they can’t feel God. The soul is a mass of shriveled up ruins.

God has endowed your soul with certain capacities for finding Him. God has endowed your soul with the capacity for **seeing** the Lord. *Matthew 5:8 Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”* But if you **neglect** to focus your spiritual eyesight toward God, the result will be spiritual blindness, and you can never **see** God again. God has endowed your soul with the capacity for **hearing** the Lord. *Hebrews 3:7 says, “Today if you will hear His voice, saith the Holy Spirit harden not your heart.”* That word **“if”** puts the responsibility upon us. God is always faithful to speak. It is our responsibility to hear and listen. *“Today if you will hear His voice, saith the Holy Spirit harden not your heart.”* But if you **neglect** to focus your spiritual hearing toward God, the result will be spiritual deafness, and you can never hear the voice of God again in your soul. God has endowed your soul with the capacity for **knowing** the Lord. *John 10:14 Jesus said, “My sheep know my voice.”* But if you neglect to focus your spiritual knowledge toward God, the result will be spiritual ignorance. You will be tossed about by every wind and doctrine, leaving your soul in moral and mental confusion. The Lord has endowed your soul with the capacity for **feeling** the Lord. *Luke 24:32 The disciples said, “Did not our hearts burn within us as He opened the scripture to us in the way.”* But if you **neglect** to function your spiritual emotions toward God, the result will be spiritual hardness until you can never **feel** the burning presence of God in your soul again. Allow me to expand a bit on this verse. Did you note what they said? *“Did not our hearts burn within us as He opened the scripture to us in the way?”* They felt the burning presence of the Lord through the Holy Scriptures. How long has it been since you have felt the burning presence of the Lord through the Holy Scriptures? Is it possible you have passed a point where the Lord can no longer communicate with you through the Holy Scriptures?

POET

The poet puts the perils of procrastination in these solemn words.

The Spirit once spoke to an innocent child
and pled in the tenderest tone.
Dear little one, let me come into your heart and
make it forever my own.
Sweet Spirit, he cried, please go away
for childhood is only for fun and play.
Some other day, some other day, when I am older
I will bid Thee stay.

The Spirit came back to the tall fair youth

with a loving and tender plea.

The harvest is ready; there is work to be done,
Arise, God is calling for thee.
O, Spirit, he cried, leave me, I pray, for the
pleasures of earth hold me in sway.
Some other day, some other day, then Holy Spirit,
I will bid thee stay.

The Spirit pled thus with the toil-worn man,
Make haste while God's grace shall last.
The silver is tingeing thy locks of brown, thy years
are slipping by fast.
O, Spirit, he cried, I should obey, but I am too
busy to pray.
Some other day, some other day, when I have time
I will bid Thee stay.

The old man now leans on his trembling staff
with a bitter and quivering sigh,
I have wasted a lifetime in sin, he cried,
And now I am going to die.
The Spirit long slighted has flown away,
No hope, no God, I cannot pray.
No other day, no other day,
The Holy Spirit has gone to stay.

Genesis 6:3 The Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

Bishop Wilson T. Hogue relates how this scripture became a tragic fulfillment for some students during an extensive college revival. Most of the student body had received the Christian experience of being converted. A group of male students became vocal in their opposition to the revival. Because their opposition was overwhelmed by the revival spirit, they banded together and decided to do something drastic. They typed a document stating they would "resist forever God's Spirit and the religion of Christ." They pierced the veins in their arms and forced their blood into a container. They dipped a pen in the blood. They signed their names in blood on the document. It got the attention of the college authorities. Their conviction ceased, even though the revival spirit continued. The record was kept through the years. As the years came and passed, these former students passed away. The Alumni Association reported not one of those students was ever saved. They died in despair with the gloom of eternal damnation hanging over them. Bishop Hogue said the action of these students was probably blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. They sinned knowingly, and despised the scriptural requirement for salvation. They reached and passed the line of departure between God's mercy and His wrath. By their defiant attitude and malicious action, they hung the sign on the door of their heart,

"DO NOT DISTURB". They became fatal victims of Genesis 6:3 "The Lord said my Spirit shall not always strive with man."

FINAL APPEAL

The Holy Spirit is the only Divine Agent that can reconcile the sinner to God with an experience of salvation.

SANCTIFIED VESSELS

Scripture Reading: *John 2:1-11*

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.”

“And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.”

“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine.”

“Jesus saith unto her, woman what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.”

“His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

“And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.”

Jesus saith unto them, “Fill the water pots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, “Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.” And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom and saith unto him, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou has kept the good wine until now.”

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and his disciples believed on him.

INTRODUCTION

For a text I will supplement this section of scripture with the words of the Apostle Paul. There is a definite connection with this text. It will be clarified at the conclusion of the message.

TEXT

II Timothy 2:21 Paul indicates we are to be *“vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet (ready) for the Master’s use and prepared unto every good work.”*

The gospel according to St. John is a unique book. It is unique in the sense that it reveals the doctrine of holiness through symbols. For instance, the vessels designated as water pots symbolize the capacity of the soul for the infilling of the Spirit. We are not stretching the symbolism when we insist upon this. A confirmation is found in *II Corinthians 4:7* *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence may be of God and not of us.”* *I Thessalonians 4:3* *“For this is the will of God even your sanctification that every one of you should know how to possess this vessel in sanctification and honor.”*

The water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It signifies the cleansing aspect of the Spirit. Also, the wine is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It is the higher symbol. It signifies the divine love, perfect peace and fullness of joy that come as a result of being sanctified holy; i.e., filled with the Spirit.

PROFITABLE LESSONS

Focusing on the major facts in this section of scripture, we can learn three profitable lessons in life. We have before us the fact of wine. This prompts me to say, “Sin is like **WORLDLY WINE**. When the drunkard starts out on his hilarious spree, with those first few drinks he feels like he is sitting on top of the world. The next morning, with a head swollen with a hangover, he feels like the whole world is now sitting on top of him. Those first few moments of pleasure have turned into hours of misery. Sin is just like that. You get your best taste in sin when you take that first taste. From then on, it becomes worse. Not so with the salvation of our Lord. The poet expressed the continuity of it singing, “It is sweeter as the years go by.” It is better today than it was yesterday. It will be better tomorrow than it was today. But this is not true with sin. After

you have drained the fanciful goblet of pleasure, you will find the serpent coiled in the bottom with beady eyes and forked fangs ready to strike. God's Word says, "***When it is finished it bringeth forth death and at the last it biteth like a serpent.***"

We have before us the fact of a wedding. This causes me to say, "Sin is just like a **WORLDLY WEDDING**. Look at the wedding scene. There is gaiety, affection and love manifested at the wedding. Alas, the scene soon changes. The guests depart. The gift wrappers are discarded. The gown is tucked away. The tuxedo is boxed away. The flowers fade away. The corsage withers away. Eventually the wedding is threatened with disappointments, disagreements, and bitter disputes. To make a long story short, it ends in the divorce court. Some may say, "It was not love in the first place". I beg to differ. It was love, but on the level of the natural. Unless marital love is supplemented with divine love, it is threatened with dissipation and can end in dissolution. Therefore, if you want to make the most of your marriage, invite Jesus Christ to your wedding. Take Him into your heart. Let Him be the head of your house. It is sin and Satan that drives the couple apart, leaving the aftermath of a broken home and the children to suffer the trauma of divided parents.

Consider another fact and learn another profitable lesson. We have before us the fact of **water**. This suggests sin is like **WORLDY WATER**. But what is wrong with water? Nothing that I know of. Nothing wrong with getting married, either. But it is still on the level of the natural. Haven't I convinced you of this truth? You are essentially spiritual in your being. Only that which is related to God; only that which is akin to the supernatural can bring supreme satisfaction and fullness of joy to your soul. This explains why people go groping and grabbing after the material things of this world, and there is still an aching void that worldly things cannot satisfy.

Visualize a desert traveler wending his way across the burning desert sand. His lips are cracked. His cheeks are blistered. His tongue is swollen and parched. He staggers on crying "water..I must have a drink of water." Mirages on the hot horizon mock his cries for water. He moves on crying, "water." He spies green foliage in the distance, an oasis in the desert. He reaches a cool sparkling water hole. He drinks and takes another drink until he is satisfied. He doesn't want another drop of water. With renewed energy, he continues his journey across the desert sands. Soon that water is expended in perspiration and energy. Away out on the desert, do you hear him crying again? "Water, I must have a drink of water." But, man, you just had a drink of water. Didn't it satisfy? "O, yes, it satisfied for a season, but I need another drink". Sin is just like that. It is seasonal. Therefore, God's Word says, "***The pleasures of sin are but for a season. But there are pleasures at the right hand of the Lord forevermore.***"

I remember reading where it was said Jesus must get through Samaria. Jesus lifted his weary sandaled feet and shuffled off. He went as far as Sychar and sat down at Jacob's well partaking of rest. A Samaritan woman came from without the city. Jesus said, "***Woman, will you give me a drink of water?***" She was taken aback and said, "***You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan. We have no dealings with each other. We don't even speak.***" Racial prejudice was very volatile. Jesus realized if He were going to minister to the need of her soul, He would have to crash that barrier. So what did our Lord do? He changed the subject to God. Why? Because every person is equal in the sight of God, regardless of race or class. Jesus said to her, "***If thou knowest the gift of God and who it was that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest ask of Him and He would have given you living water.***" I can imagine the woman laughed out loud and said, "The well is deep and you don't have anything with which to draw water." This woman had so much of the mud of materialism in her eyes she could not discern spiritual things. I have preached to many who are in this sad predicament. When God called me to preach, I made up my mind I would preach God's Word verse and chapter. As I preached the deep truth of the

scriptures, some people would blink their eyes at me like a toad in a hailstorm, as if I were preaching in Greek or Hebrew. It bothered me at first. I was able to get victory over it. For I was reading in the Corinthian epistle where Paul said, ***“The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit for they are foolishness unto him.”*** Therefore, I must conclude some people are so natural, material minded and carnal, the preaching of the scriptures is foolishness unto them. Therefore, I will continue to preach the Word of God because it brings results for all of eternity.

The woman at the well had so much of the dust of worldly activities in her eyes she could not discern spiritual things. Jesus saw he would have to enlighten her. So what did our Lord do? Did He organize a demonstration, boycott the well, go in and burn and loot the city? NO! You don't use savage tactics to enforce Christian principles. What did our Lord do? He changed the subject to God. He said to the woman, ***“If you drink of the water from this well, you will thirst again.”*** This is the point I am trying to get across to you. If you drink from the water of this world, you will thirst again. But Jesus said, ***“The water that I shall give thee will be in you (that is heartfelt experience), a well of water springing up to everlasting life. If you drink of it, you will never thirst again.”*** She got her eyes open to the truth. She became real thirsty and said, ***“Sir, give me a drink that I thirst not.”*** Christ gave her a drink of heavenly water. It so satisfied and thrilled her soul, she forgot what she came after. She left her water pot at the curbside of Jacob's well. She rushed back to the city to tell the people what Jesus had done for her. She came for a drink of worldly water. Christ gave her a drink of heavenly water. It so blessed her soul; she wanted everybody to get a drink of it. I can imagine had this woman received the experience in a revival today, she would have gone on her way singing,

**All my life long I had panted for a drop from some cool spring,
That I hoped would quench the burning of the thirst I felt within.**

Feeding on the husks around me, till my strength was almost gone,
Longed my soul for something better, only still to hunger on.

Poor I was and sought for riches, something that would satisfy,
But the dust I gathered round me only mocked my soul's sad cry.

Hallelujah, I have found Him, whom my soul so long has craved,
Jesus satisfies my longings, through His blood I now am saved.

Well of water, ever springing, bread of life so rich and free,
Untold wealth that never faileth, my Redeemer is to me.
Clara T. Williams...1881

You can find a satisfying experience with the Savior.

PRACTICAL CONDITIONS

Before our Lord could perform the miracle of changing the water into wine, three practical conditions had to be met. It follows, before Christ can perform the miracle of sanctifying you holy, these same conditions must be met in a most practical manner. In the first place, there must exist the condition of **EMPTINESS**. You cannot be filled until first you have been emptied. Emptied of what? The **SELF** life. Selfishness is the stumbling block standing in the way of

sanctification of Christians.

A traveler was walking through the country by night. He accidentally fell into a well. There wasn't any water in the well, but it was so deep, he couldn't get out by himself. His cries of distress reached the ears of a neighboring farmer. The farmer came and saw the man's plight. He rushed to the barn, secured a rope to make the rescue. He lowered the rope and said to the man in the well, "Get a firm grip, and I will pull you to the top." The rope slipped through the man's hands as if they were greased with butter. The farmer peered into the depths of the well and said, "Mister, have you something else in your hands besides the rope?" The man in the well said, "Yes, I have some packages I want to save as well as myself." The farmer said, "Mister, when you become willing to put down that last package and get a firm grip on the rope, I will pull you to the top." Only as the man put down the last package, and got a grip on the rope was he pulled to the top, rescued and sent on his way. Time and again you have found yourself bogged down in the clay of carnality, complaining the Lord won't sanctify you holy. That is one of the devil's lies. *I Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."* If you will lay aside that last package, God will lower the golden chain of holiness. Get a firm grip of faith. He will pull you to the top. Establish your feet on the highway of holiness. Songs of deliverance will burst forth from your sanctified soul.

There must also exist the condition of **CLEANLINESS**. Traditionally, the water pots were placed in a conspicuous place in the home. Travelers would rinse the dust off of their hands in these vessels. Likewise, we must be serving as vessels of cleanliness before the Lord can sanctify us holy. To some this may sound to be a bit misleading; but not if you stay with the scriptures. In the first place, there is to be a washing of regeneration. *Titus 3:5*. But a washing of regeneration is not sufficient in itself. There must follow a deeper cleansing. You must be cleansed from the sin principle; namely, the carnal nature. This is always the scriptural order. I will cite one example out of many to reinforce this doctrinal position. *I Corinthians 3:1 Paul said, "And I brethren could not speak to you as spiritual but as carnal even as babes in Christ."* They were addressed as brethren and classified as being in Christ. This is evidence of their conversion. But note the defects. They were yet carnal. They were "babes". Babyishness is a trait of carnality. Turn now to *II Corinthians 7:1* and you will see what is required of these "babes in Christ". It reads, *"Having therefore these promises dearly beloved."* He is not talking to sinners here. He is addressing the "dearly beloved". Who are these "dearly beloved"? The babes in Christ who are yet carnal. He said, *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from ALL filthiness of the flesh and spirit PERFECTING holiness in the fear of God."*

Furthermore, there must exist the condition of **THIRSTINESS**. You don't usually pour yourself a glass of water unless you are thirsty. Likewise, you will never seek the high (it is God's highest) and glorious experience of being sanctified holy until you thirst after it. Jesus said, *Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."* Filled with what? The **SPIRIT** of righteousness. If you claim you are saved, but have no thirst for the fullness of the Spirit, you are probably in a backslidden condition. When the Lord saves your soul, He puts within your heart a thirst for the fullness of the **SPIRIT**.

Christ continues this symbolism in *John 7:37 He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. "But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."* If you are a born again Christian, then you should receive the fullness of the Spirit described by Jesus as rivers of living waters flowing through your inner being.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

In conclusion, I will present three personal questions concerning the matter of being filled with the Spirit. First, how is this experience **OBTAINED**? The answer comes from the Mother of Jesus. She said, *“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”* It is a definite dedication, a complete consecration to the whole will of God. The bottom line in this matter is, “Lord, not my will, but thine be done.”

Let me call your attention to a significant truth here. Before Christ could perform the miracle of turning the water into wine, He had to have an invitation to the wedding. Even an invitation to the wedding was not sufficient. At the point in time, Christ had to be present at this wedding. So it follows, before Christ can fill you with the Spirit, first He must have been invited into your heart in saving grace. Furthermore, He must be present in your heart in saving grace now before He can sanctify you holy. Nowhere can it be shown in scripture Jesus sanctifies sinners holy. The divine order is the sinner must be converted. Then as a Christian convert, he is commanded to be sanctified holy. This makes holiness a **second crisis** experience in the life of the born again Christian.

Consider another question. How is this experience **RETAINED**? John Wesley gives emphasis to this question. In the year 1790 he wrote a letter to Dr. Adam Clark. He said, “To retain the gift of God is much more than to gain it. And scarcely one person out of three retains the gift of God after they receive it.” At first, I thought Mr. Wesley was a bit uncharitable. But after making observations through the church, I have concluded he was right. How many people who once enjoyed this blessed experience have lost it? Their vessels have leaked out. They have become vapour and dry; in some cases, stale, stagnant and even sour. I can’t think of anything worse than holiness turned sour. A sour holiness is a sham holiness. Holiness is more than a bunch of negative prohibitions. Holiness is a positive exhibition of the Christ life. Holiness is more than a law to be enjoined; holiness is a life to be enjoyed. If you are not enjoying holiness, it is evidence you don’t have the experience.

How are we going to keep this experience after we get it? It is answered in this section of the scripture. Jesus said to the servants, *“Draw out now and bear to the governor of the feast.”* As they were drawing out, the miracle occurred. The water turned into wine. So it follows as we are giving the Holy Spirit out in service to a needy neighborhood, then we see the supernatural take place. Then we witness miracles of conversion. It is a trite, but true, saying, you cannot keep the Holy Spirit as a church or as a convert unless you are continually sharing Him with a needy community. Furthermore, you cannot share the Holy Spirit with others unless you have the Holy Spirit in sanctifying power.

HEARTRENDING STORY

I read a heartrending story about a widow. She had a tremendous debt and couldn’t pay it. Her creditors were pressuring her. They said, “If you don’t pay this debt, we are going to take your two sons and make them as slaves to work it off.” She was heartbroken because she couldn’t pay. But it so happened her pastor, Rev. Elisha, was down in that neighborhood and made a pastoral call on her. She told the preacher all of her troubles. He finally interrupted her and said, “Sister, what do you have left in the house?” She said, “Preacher, I don’t have anything left. We are down to nothing.” Then she thought for a moment. She said, “There is a little pot of oil back here on the shelf.” The preacher got excited. He said, “Sister, that is enough for God to work upon.” What? A little pot of oil? Remember the prophet said, *“Who hath despised the day of small things?”* Have you noticed some people are always looking for big things, big names and big people to do God’s work? Now, understand me, spiritually speaking, God does not use big things, big names, or big people to do His work. Do you recall King Saul? He stood head and

shoulders above every man. But the prophet of God had to rebuke him, saying, ***“Saul, when thou wast little in thine own sight, God made thee King over Israel.”*** But Saul got too big for the job in God’s sight. Therefore, God retired him. If we are going to be successful and serviceable in God’s Kingdom work, then we must remain humble. The preacher said, “Sister, that little pot of oil is enough for God to work on. I want you to go out and borrow vessels from your neighbors. Don’t be stingy and skimpy about it. Get every vessel you can find. Fill up every room in the house.” He said, “Now shut the door. Get that little pot of oil and start pouring.” She started pouring from this little pot of oil into a large vessel. As she was giving out; as she was sharing, the supernatural took place. That little pot of oil kept on flowing. She filled one large vessel after another. She was in the last room filling the last large vessel. She called out, “Son, bring me another vessel.” He said, “We don’t have any more vessels.” And the Bible says, ***“The oil stopped.”*** Needless to say, that oil symbolizes the blessed outpouring of the Spirit. There is a plenitude of the supply of God’s Holy Spirit in the New Jerusalem. This generation hasn’t exhausted that supply. I challenge you. Bring in these empty, aching, broken hearts and your church will experience the supernatural and witness the miracles of grace. I have never seen perpetual motion in nature, but I believe there is perpetual motion in grace. I am convinced that little pot of oil would still be pouring today if they could have found more vessels. I don’t think it would have ever stopped pouring. We are still living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. This generation has not exhausted the supply of the Spirit. Needless to say, the widow sold the oil and paid her debtors. It is still true today, “My God shall supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory”.

One final question. How is this experience **MAINTAINED**? Tell me how the spring in the side of the mountain is maintained, and then I can tell you how this experience is maintained. Look at that spring in the side of the mountain, instant in season and out of season, always ready to give a man a drink of water. Its waters are never muddy, stale, stagnate or sour. Always fresh, always the same. When everything is frostbitten, frigid and formalized around it, that spring keeps gushing out. When everything is petrified, fossilized and dust covered about it, that spring continues to pour forth. You can’t freeze it out. You can’t dry it up. It is not in bondage to its environment. I don’t think some recognized it, but I just described in perpetuity the experience of holiness. How is the spring in the side of the mountain maintained? If you will go down into that mountain, you will discover the spring is fed by underground caverns of water. But you won’t find your answer there. Trace those underground caverns out to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Climb atop each raindrop into the clouds of the heavens. While you are skipping through the clouds, take time to step out to the corner of a cloud. Hitchhike a ride in Elijah’s chariot. Get on board and call out for your destination “the New Jerusalem”. When you come to a skidding stop on the streets of glory, step down, make your way through the angelic throngs and take a stroll alongside the **RIVER OF LIFE**. There you will find the answer to everything in nature and grace. How is it? It’s like this. When the Lord sanctified us, He connected a tributary from the **RIVER OF LIFE** in heaven to our hearts. So long as we keep the connection, and keep the channel clear, this experience will never dry up on us. It will be a fresh experience every day. Are you enjoying the filling of the Spirit in sanctifying power?

At the beginning of the message, I said there was a connection between the text and the message. Let me clarify the connection. ***II Timothy 2:21. The text says, “We are to be vessels unto honor, sanctified and”***. There is the connecting word. Sanctified and what? It reads, ***“Sanctified and ready.” Sanctified and ready. Ready for what? Ready for the Master’s use.*** The rest of the text says, ***“Sanctified.....and prepared unto every good work.”*** Some have questioned why we urge the people to be sanctified holy. For this reason. According to the text, if you are not sanctified, then you are not spiritually ready for the Master’s use. You are not

prepared for His work.

THE COURSE OF HOLINESS

Scripture reading...Hebrews 12:1-3, 9-14

Text Hebrews 12:1 "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

INTRODUCTION

I call your attention to Chapter 12: Vs. 14 for emphasis. It reads, ***"Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."*** Furthermore, I have accentuated one word in this verse. It's the word 'holiness'. Frequently the terms holiness and sanctification are used interchangeably to refer to the same experience. Technically, there is a distinction between the terms. For instance, words ending in "ness" such as holiness indicate a state of being. Therefore, holiness is the state of being holy. On the other hand, words ending in "ion" such as sanctification indicate an action. Therefore, sanctification is the divine act whereby the Holy Spirit removes the sin nature from the heart of the convert and renders the soul into a state of holiness. This is what is meant when you are exhorted to seek and obtain an experience of holiness. It is a God-given experience.

INHERITANCE OF THE SANCTIFIED

Acts 26:18 Paul speaks of the inheritance of the sanctified. In connection with this inheritance, Jesus said, ***John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe in me also. In my Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will also come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also."***

The mansion the Lord has gone to prepare for us must be magnificent beyond comparison. Abraham saw its foundation in his day. And – the Architect of the Ages – while on earth He was called the "carpenter from Nazareth", He ascended from Mount Olivet back to the Father in heaven nearly 2,000 years ago to put the finishing touches on it. The heavenly mansion is included as an important part of the inheritance of the sanctified. Therefore, your deed and title to a home in heaven depends upon your seeking and receiving an experience of holiness. As a matter of fact, your eternal destination to heaven or hell will be determined by your acceptance or rejection of holiness. God Almighty confronts you with a choice. To put it plainly, "It is holiness or it is hell."

Now if you will turn to Verse 1, we will mark these words as a text. It reads, ***"LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US."*** In this text our journey from earth to heaven is described as a race. If you make it to heaven, you must follow the COURSE OF HOLINESS.

Now, in order to qualify as a participant in the heavenly race, there are FOUR DIVINE REQUIREMENTS you must follow. First, you must be willing to follow a:

a. PRESCRIBED COURSE

The text says ***"The race is SET before us."*** From this we can conclude this race has already been PRESET. The Savior has SET the course of this race. Therefore, you cannot run off in any direction you choose and expect to reach the destination of heaven. Now – some who have yielded to the pressure of what they call "religious tolerance" have concluded, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe, just so you are sincere in your beliefs because we are all headed toward the same place." But God said, ***Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man."*** Now here is a man who sincerely believes he is running the right course. But the

remainder of the verse says, ***“but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*** Sincerity is not acceptable to God as a substitute for the requirements of salvation. Jesus said, ***“broad is the way and wide is the gate that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat.”*** ***Ephesians 2:2*** Paul says, ***“These people are walking according to the course of this world fulfilling the desires of the flesh.”*** Jesus said, ***“Straight is the way that leads to life eternal.”*** You must run your life straight with the scripture if you are going to stay the course of this heavenly race. Christ has **chartered** the course of this heavenly race. He said, ***“I am the way.”*** We must follow His directions, or we will miss the way. He said, ***“I am the truth.”*** We must accept what He has said as truth, or we will end in error. He said, ***“I am the life.”*** We must receive His regenerating life, or we will remain forever dead in trespasses and sin.

Many who have started in this race have been disqualified because they have refused to follow the **PRECRIBED COURSE**. I wonder if it has become of any great concern to you that many people with whom you are acquainted started in the heavenly race; they ran well for a season and then dropped out. Their excuses for quitting the race are as varied as their personalities. But the real reason they dropped out of the race is disclosed in Verse 1. There the writer says, ***“Let us lay aside the SIN which doth so easily beset us.”*** The Greek word for sin in this case is sin in the singular and not sins in the plural. It is a reference to the sin nature from which all sinful actions eventually proceed. It is original sin transmitted to us through the fall of Adam back in the beginning. We were all born with the sin nature within our hearts. The Greek text describes the sin nature as a flowing garment that has a tendency to wrap itself around us and impede our running. It is interesting the prophet ***Hosea 11:7*** describes the sin nature as a ***“bent to backsliding.”*** The crippling effect of this twist in our moral nature is exposed in Verse 13. There the writer says, ***“Make straight paths for your feet.”*** The Greek text conveys the thought we are to run upright and straight forward. In the same verse, the writer acknowledges we have been afflicted with a spiritual lameness that prevents us from running even. The Greek text indicates this spiritual lameness is a lame thing. And the Greek word for this lame thing is a technical medical term which means a dislocated joint. We were all born with this dislocated joint in our moral nature, and this dislocated joint produces a spiritual lameness that cripples us to the extent we can no longer run in the heavenly race. Many have reached this crucial point in the race. They have become frustrated. They don't want to drop out, but they are spiritually lame, and they can't continue on. I sense I have preached to some who started in the race; you ran well for a season. But the dislocated joint you were born with in your moral nature has crippled you with a spiritual lameness and now you can't carry on. Oh, you don't want to drop out, but your spiritual lameness prevents you from continuing the race. So, I ask – What are you going to do about it? You don't want to drop out of the race and miss heaven, but you are so spiritually lame you cannot go on. Perhaps a better question would be, “What can you do about it?” The Lord in His marvelous grace has provided a remedy for this spiritual lameness. It is revealed in Verse 13. There He says, ***“Let the lame be healed.”*** And holiness is the remedy that will take the dislocated joint in your moral nature and set it properly. Holiness is the remedy that will take the ***“bent to backsliding in your heart”*** and straighten it out. Holiness is the remedy that will cure you of your crippled condition. Holiness is the remedy that will heal you of spiritual lameness so you can continue in the race. Now there is the remedy. The Lord has provided it for you, but it involves your consent. That is why it reads, ***“LET the lame be healed.”*** You don't have to drop out. All you have to do is seek and receive the remedy. But suppose you reject the remedy as so many have. What is the alternative? It is revealed in Verse 13. The lame that reject the remedy will be turned out of the way. To be turned out of the way is to be turned out of this heavenly race. To be turned out of the race is to be turned from heaven and turned toward hell. So, once again, God Almighty confronts you with a choice. It is either seek the remedy or suffer the tragedy. The remedy is holiness. The tragedy is hell. Here again, God puts the plain proposition of the truth to you. It is holiness or it is hell.

Now, before you can experience the healing of holiness in Verse 13, you must dispose of the sin nature in Verse 1, for the sin nature in Verse 1 is the connectional cause of the spiritual lameness in Verse 13. How does the writer propose we dispose of the sin nature? He says, ***“Let us lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us.”*** Here again, this involves your consent. You have to let Him do it. He stands ready to do it – but you must let Him do it.

“Let us lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us.” The Greek text reads, ***“Put it away promptly, do it now, and have done with it.”*** Entire sanctification is the experience that can achieve the removal of the sin nature from the heart of the convert. So, consequently, God leads to heaven only those whom He sanctifies on earth. A holy God will never admit an unholy people into the Holy City. Once again, we are confronted with the plain proposition of the truth. It is holiness or it is hell.

Now, if you will look at the test, I will lift out a word that reveals another Divine Requirement you must follow in this race. The text reads, “Let us RUN the race that is set before us. The word RUN suggests PERSISTENCE. We are required to run the heavenly race with

ii. **PERSISTENCE**

The Greek word for run in this case literally means, “to keep on running”. Now if you will recall the preceding instructions for the removal of the sin nature, you will see how this produces a spiritual fitness that will enable you to continue in this heavenly race. Let me put it altogether for you. It reads, ***“Let us lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Put it away promptly, do it now and have done with it. Let the lame thing be healed and keep on running.”*** If you exercise this kind of persistence, you will be able to cross the finish line in this race.

It is a proven fact more goals are reached by a persistent attitude than by mental capacity. A high degree of persistence is preferred to a high intelligence quotient in achieving the goals in life. The goal of a long journey is reached by simply placing one foot in front of the other and persistently taking one step at a time. This doesn’t mean we will not encounter some difficulties in the heavenly race. The writer recognized that we would. He covers it in Verse 3. He said, ***“Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds, look unto Jesus.”*** Why does he point us to Christ? Because Christ is our Exemplar. Christ ran this race successfully before us. He is our Forerunner. ***“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.”***

When Christ was completing the heavenly race here on earth, from the cross of Calvary He bowed His devoted head and said, ***“It is finished.”*** Now Jesus did not say, “I have failed”. If Jesus had said, “I have failed”, the Holy Angels would have dropped dead on the golden streets of glory. If Jesus had said, “I have failed”, hell would have burst forth in jubilee, celebrating Satan’s triumph over the Savior. If Christ had said, “I have failed”, the vultures of despair would have perched on every tombstone, croaking the sad refrain of death over the grave of every departed saint. If Christ had said, “I have failed”, God Almighty would have withdrawn from this world into the darkness and silence of eternity, never to be heard from again. But Glory be to God, Jesus did not say, “I have failed”. Triumphantly, He said, ***“It is finished.”***

When I take a panoramic view of all the scriptures concerning the Divine plan of salvation, I think the Savior might have expressed the triumph of His race in these words. In substance the Savior said, “I see you down there wandering in the wilderness of sin, lost without hope, unable to find your way out. I see the tangled mess of sin into which you have fallen. So I volunteered to give my life as a ransom for your sins. I removed by sovereign crown, laid aside my royal robes, stepped down from my eternal throne. I condescended to come into your cruel world where the foxes have dens and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay His head. I took upon myself flesh and blood such as yours. I endured the cold of the night and the heat of the day. I suffered hunger, thirst and exhaustion. Forty days and nights I was severely tempted by the devil in the wilderness. I left the splendors of glory to bring you back to God. I came to remove the impossible obstacle that prevents you from coming to God. Before my crucifixion, I never knew what it was to be separated from my Heavenly Father. Then at Calvary, the Father had to turn His back upon me and let me die as an offering for your sins. In the darkness and silence of that separation – out of the anguish of my soul, I cried out, ‘*My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*’ But you won’t have to suffer the trauma of that experience. I have given you my word. ‘*Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.*’ The words of my promise have been engraved upon the marble pillars of Eternity. And it reads, ‘*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*’ With my cross I have cleared a way of salvation for you. I carried my cross to the very brink of the chasm of sin that separates you from God. There with my bleeding body nailed to it, I placed my cross as a bridge to span the impossible gulf between you and God. I am standing there faithfully making intercession for you. So come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Glory to God, when I look to Jesus, the **PARAGON** of victory, He inspires me to keep on running. Blessed Lord, if nobody else chooses to run this straight and narrow way, if you will give us the grace, we will keep on running until we cross the finish line with shouts of victory.

Reaching into the text, I will pull out another word that reveals a **DIVINE REQUIREMENT** we must follow in this race. The text reads, “*Let us run with PATIENCE the race that is set before us.*” We are required to run this race with

III. PATIENCE

There are some rules that regulate our patience in this race. If you fail to follow these rules, you will be evicted from the race. In this race you encounter some participants who, through no fault of their own, will try your patience. First, there is a rule regarding **COMPETITION**. Next, a rule concerning **COOPERATION**. And yet another rule in the matter of **COMPARISON**.

As you run in this race, you will meet some people who will **outshine** you in the areas of education, wisdom and knowledge. But be patient and keep on running. The Lord has promised to guide you into all the truth that is necessary to win this race. As you continue in this race, you will see some who are running smoother and easier than you are. They will **outstrip** you in the race. But – don’t be dissuaded from the **course**. Be patient and keep on running. In this race you will observe some who are running faster than you are. They will **outdistance** you in the race. Some will run so far ahead of you there will be stretches in the race when you will have to run alone. You will be tempted to think there is nobody else running this straight and narrow

way. But be patient and keep on running. There are new participants entering this race every day. Eventually they will come alongside to encourage you with their testimonies and support you with their fellowship. So be patient and keep on running, because everyone who crosses the finish line in this race is a winner. The only way you can lose in this race is to drop out. Consequently, there is no **COMPETITION** in the heavenly race. Since there is no competition, there is no competitive spirit among the participants. Because there is no competitive spirit, there are no conflicts among the truly sanctified in the heavenly race. If you stoop to run this race in competition with another Christian, you will be disqualified and the Savior will rule you out of the race.

There will be times as you run in this race you will become so exhausted your arms will hang down and your knees will become feeble. But be patient and keep on running. Eventually the Lord will send somebody alongside to share their strength with you. They will lift up the hands that hang down and straighten the feeble knees so you can keep on running. For we run this race in **COOPERATION** with each other. So we read in *Galatians 6:1-2* ***“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burden and so fulfill the law of Christ.”***

As we run in this race, we are not to make comparisons with each other. *II Corinthians 10:12* ***Paul said, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number – or compare ourselves with some that uplift themselves – for they measure themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”***

Instead we compare ourselves with Christ our Forerunner. He ran the race successfully before us, enduring the cross, despising the shame and the contradiction of sinners against Him.

So – the Blessed Lord is not concerned with how clever or glamorous you run in this race. He is not impressed with how fast or fancy you run in this race. But – He is especially concerned that we continue in the race until we cross the finish line standing upright with a shout of triumph. The Holy Angels will be there to receive us. They will escort us into the banquet hall of the New Jerusalem. They will seat us at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and prepare our hearts for the crowning and coronation of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Unto Him be honor and power everlasting!

Consider another word that reveals a Divine Requirement we must follow in this race. It is suggested in Verse 14. It reads, ***“Follow PEACE with all men.”*** We are required to run this race following

IV. PEACE

with all men. One translation reads, ***“Pursue peace with all men.”*** *Romans 12:18* ***Paul said, “As much as lieth within you, live peaceably with all men.”***

The prophet caught a preview of Christ as He was running this race. He hailed Him as the

“PRINCE OF PEACE”. As Christ, the Prince of Peace was running this race, He said in *Matthew 5:9* ***“Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS for they are the children of God.”***

We are required to run this race peaceably with all men. And holiness is the experience that will enable you to meet this DIVINE REQUIREMENT. You will see that in Verses 10, 11. *Verse 10 says, “The Heavenly Father chastens us that we might be partakers of His holiness.” Verse 11 says “Afterward it (the word ‘it’ refers to the holiness we are chastened to in verse 10) “Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.”*

If you will go with me back to my boyhood days, I will endeavor to show you how we can exercise peace in this heavenly race. In my early teens I saved my money to buy a newspaper route. I delivered the evening newspaper to about 100 customers in our neighborhood. This meant walking several blocks in all kinds of weather. I carried the newspapers in two canvas bags, one on each shoulder. At the beginning the load was heavy. Each time I delivered a newspaper the load became less. The closer I got to home, the lighter the load became. I walked through snow, slipping and falling on the ice, the wind and sleet stinging my face. In the summer, I had to contend with a blazing hot sun, high humidity; occasionally I became drenched with a sudden thundershower. My mother always prepared an old-fashioned warm supper each evening. She had supper timed, so when I stepped in the back door, we were ready to sit down at the table. After I had delivered the last newspaper, I turned the corner and started down the avenue toward home. I had to pass a house that had a chain link fence around it. Those people had a large dog that had a particular dislike for newspaper boys. That dog would wait for me each evening. When he saw me coming, he would crouch on the front porch, put his head between his front paws, and close his eyes about halfway. I suppose he thought I couldn't see him. When I reached the edge of the fence walking on the sidewalk alongside of it, this dog would wait until I reached the gate, then like a bolt of lightning, he came off of that porch charging down the walkway, growling and barking. He jumped against the gate as high as he could. When he saw this did not intimidate me, then he stepped back and showed his teeth and snarled at me. He would attempt to bite through the fence. He kept threatening until I reached the end of the fence. Then that dog would turn around and shake himself and proudly strut back to the porch as if to say, “I sure scared that kid off.” That dog didn't scare me off. I was headed for home. A few more steps and I would be out of the weather seated at the warm supper table. I will admit there were times when I was tempted to select some sizeable stones and carry them in the bottom of my paper bags and give that dog a good battle. But the thought occurred to me – my load is heavy enough. Why should I weight myself down with an extra load for a barking dog that was fenced in and couldn't stop me? Furthermore, I knew if I stopped and got into a dogfight, I would miss the warm supper that was prepared for me. So I kept the peace, stayed the course and ran toward home.

The illustration may appear to be simplistic, but we have a somewhat similar situation in the heavenly race. Satan has unleashed the hounds of hell against us. They come at us howling with harassment. They growl at us with their grudges, bark at us with their backbiting, snap at us with their slander, and snarl at us with their surmises. Just because we do not stop and engage them in conflict, they say to themselves, “We sure scared that sanctified bunch off.” They didn't scare us off. We are in a hurry because we are headed toward our heavenly home. We don't have to waste time in a dog fight, for we are on our way to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. So, keep the peace, stay on the course and keep on running.

Scholars cannot agree if the Apostle Paul had anything to do with the writing of the Hebrew epistle. Regardless of the controversy, I am convinced he was a worthy participant in the heavenly race. His physical appearance in the race left much to be desired. He ran this race handicapped as a hunchback. He was sickly most of his adult life. He ran the race with poor eyesight that was failing him. As if that were not enough, Satan sent a messenger to buffet him with a thorn in the flesh. It became unbearable and Paul petitioned the Lord for help. The Lord assured him saying, ***“My grace is sufficient for thee.”*** So Paul kept on running. Eventually he reached a point in the race where he took an inventory of all things that were hindering his running. He made such a radical reduction of those things, when he was through; he only had one thing left. Then he said, ***“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before me.”*** Paul reasoned like this, ***“These worldly things I am discarding behind me, making it possible for me to achieve the heavenly things that are before me.”*** This sounds like a good exchange. Do you remember Paul saying, ***“We look not at the things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal.”*** Now, that’s the worldly things he left behind. Then he says, ***“We look at the things which are unseen, for the things which are unseen are eternal.”*** That’s the heavenly things for which he was reaching forth. Now to the worldly-minded, this might seem like a foolish exchange. Paul realized this. He said, ***“The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit for they are foolishness unto him.”*** The things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned. When Paul saw the wisdom of exchanging worldly things for the heavenly things, he said, ***“The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things God has prepared for them that love Him.”*** When I saw this truth, I dumped my worldly junk, and I have no desire to go back and pick it up. Paul laid aside every weight and said, ***“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”***

When Satan saw Paul was about to cross the finish line, he decided to sic the dogs of the devil on him. The motives of these purpose-driven devilish dogs can be summarized in the following words, “We will wear Paul down and break his will until he can no longer fight against sin. We will scare the religion out of him and frustrate his faith and force him off of the course.”

They caught up with Paul and said, ***“If you don’t stop preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are going to chop your head off. Now what do you think about that?”*** I can imagine Paul responded, “It is a matter of little concern to me. If I am permitted to live, I will live my life preaching the gospel of Christ. If I am put to death, I will count this as gain, for I have a desire to depart and be with Christ. I have settled in my mind, ‘for me to live is Christ and to die is gain’.” They said, “Paul, the blade has been sharpened. The executioner is ready. Do you have anything further to say?” Paul responded, ***“I am ready to be offered. You may sever my head from my body with your sword, but who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** The Lord touched Paul’s failing eyesight. He enabled him to penetrate the demonic darkness that surrounded him. He saw the brightness of the Heavenly City. He heard the cheers of the saints from the portals of heaven shouting him on. He saw a great cloud of witnesses waving him onward. The light which outshone the brightness of the

noonday sun at the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus was shining on the pathway before him. It is written, ***“The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*** The light of heaven focused brightly on the finish line. Paul saw it. He reached out by faith and claimed the victory ahead of time. He said, ***“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”***

The razor sharp blade of the executioner struck Paul’s neck. Before his decapitated head fell to the ground, in his resurrection body, Paul crossed the finish line safe in the arms of Jesus. The Lord placed the kiss of victory on his brow, the crown upon his head, and the robe about his shoulders. The Savior embraced him with His everlasting love. He smiled upon him and said, ***“Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord.”*** The martyred saint and the Blessed Savior walked into the Heavenly City together. The gates swung shut. Those gates shut out sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave. Those gates shut out the sickness, sorrow, the tears, and the temptations that he had suffered on the journey. Furthermore, the gates shut out the dogs of the devil. The scripture says, ***Revelation 22:15 “For without are dogs.”*** These dogs that are shut outside of the gates of heaven are people who once started in this race. They came up to the light of holiness and refused to walk in it. Consequently, they have been turned out of the race. They have become apostates and are used as the dogs of the devil to harass and hinder the sanctified who are faithfully running in this race. They, too, will be shut outside the gates of heaven.

Because Christ completed the race in victory, this made it possible for Paul to complete the race, also. Through the centuries, countless multitudes have finished this race.

“Wherefore seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

THE SWORDLESS KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: John 18:1-11

Texts: Verse 11 “Peter, put up thy sword.”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword”

INTRODUCTION

For a comprehensive coverage of the scripture before us, I am going to use two texts. The first text is found in Verse 11. It reads, “**Peter, put up thy sword.**” The second text is recorded in **Hebrews 4:12**. It reads, “**For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.**”

With the rapid advance of civilization, various schools of philosophy have influenced the ranks of the church. Some of these philosophies have been beneficial to the church, while others have been detrimental to the cause of Christ. The philosophies that have endangered the church are humanism, naturalism and materialism. These vain philosophies have so endangered the church until now some churches are substituting the human for the Divine, the natural for Supernatural, the material for Spiritual. Because of these threatening trends, I am speaking to you from the subject, “**THE SWORDLESS KINGDOM**”. That subject is in direct opposition to every humanistic, naturalistic and materialistic concept of life.

Now the Word of God contains one message of salvation from the first preposition in Genesis to the last benediction in the Book of Revelation. Therefore, it is impossible to confine any one truth to fragmenting verses or chapters. Therefore, I propose to merge these two texts into one. By merging these two texts into one, we get this major thought. “Peter, put up thy **SWORD** for the Word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged **SWORD**.” Now I am insisting these two verses were intended to read in this matter because they come from two different authors. But – anybody who has a reading knowledge of the New Testament will at once recognize there is a definite harmony between these two texts. By connecting them together, we can more easily discover the true nature of the Kingdom of God and discover the lesson which Christ taught Peter without doing any injustice to the harmony of the scriptures.

Now the empires of earth, that is the Kingdoms of this world, have been brought into existence by brute force. They are held intact by merciless militarism. Such was Peter’s carnal concept of the Kingdom of God. Peter thought surely Christ would demolish the Roman regime and set up an earthly government that would restore Israel to power and rule this world with a rod of iron. With this carnal thought in mind, when a band of men approached Christ in the garden equipped with their lanterns, torches and weapons, Peter stood up to defend his Master. Peter whipped out his sword and slashed at him and cut off his right ear. Christ rebuked Peter. He said, “**Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath.**” Then it became necessary for Christ to heal the ear of the wounded man with a Divine touch. But in one distinct lesson, Christ taught Peter the Kingdom of God is not to be advanced with a bloody sword. Neither is it to be maintained by human strength. I know we become a bit disgruntled with the slowness of Peter to grasp the true significance of the Kingdom of God. But in my travels, I have met church members whose ideas of the Kingdom of God are more mistaken than those of Peter. Their idea of the Kingdom of God consists of ultra-modern church architecture, large church memberships, lucrative church treasuries – so, consequently, they find it easy to proselyte the smaller churches for the purpose of increasing their own. Their hope lies within denominational strength. Their success is gauged by their statistical records. Right away someone is thinking ‘what is the Kingdom of God?’ To get a

proper definition of the Kingdom of God, we will have to go to the scriptures. **Romans 14:17** says, ***“The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*** At once you can see the Kingdom of God is essentially spiritual in its being. Let me ask, “What member in your church has a bank account large enough to purchase righteousness? What merchant in the downtown area can sell you peace? What manufacturer can produce joy? What army in the world is great enough to capture the Holy Spirit and thereby persuade Him to advise their earthly kingdoms? Such carnal reasoning is absurd. Righteousness, peace and joy are spiritual qualities. You can’t buy them at the shopping center in the same way you would purchase a new coat. And the Holy Spirit, who is the sustainer of the Kingdom of God, cannot be bribed. He cannot be coerced to advance our silly notions and selfish ambitions, even though they may be in the name of the church or under the banner of denominationalism. I have shown you the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. Now the question arises, “Where is it located?” “Where is it found?” Christ was careful to answer this question. **John 3:3** He said, ***“Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”*** or perceive or comprehend the Kingdom of God. Think of it – the Kingdom of God is available! – all about you - but you can’t see it – you can’t perceive it – you can’t comprehend it until you have been born again of the Spirit. Now the question follows. Who constitutes the citizenship of the Kingdom of God? Christ was careful to answer this question. **John 3:5** He said, ***“Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”*** Now, by the physical procedure of observing a church building and walking up the steps and down the aisle to the front, with certain manipulations you can get your name on the membership roll and enter that particular denomination. But you can’t gain entrance into the Kingdom of God that way. The only way you can get into the Kingdom of God is by being born again of the Spirit.

Now I have shown you through the scriptures the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom located in the heart of the person who has been born again of the Spirit. Now with this Biblical foundation in mind, we will proceed to discuss the Kingdom of God from a threefold standpoint.

THREEFOLD STANDPOINT

First, we will review the **WARRIORS** in the Kingdom of God. Next, we will inspect the **WEAPONS** that are being used in the Kingdom of God. Finally, in an active way, hopefully we will enter into the **WARFARE** of the Kingdom of God.

I. WARRIORS

There are two distinct types of warriors in the Kingdom of God. There are the spiritually **perfect** who stand at the frontline of the battle, arrayed in the full armor of God, continually pressing the battle against sin and Satan. On the other hand, there are the spiritually **imperfect** who must be limited to inactive duty because they cannot stand the stress and strain of the battle. I use the word **perfect** in the scriptural sense. The Lord used it when He commanded us in **Matthew 5:48** ***“Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”***

Peter in his pre-Pentecostal state is a type of the spiritual **imperfection** seen in the life of raw recruits. On the other hand, Christ is a type of the spiritual **perfection** exhibited in the life of combat warriors. Peter was not conditioned as a full-fledged soldier of the cross. There was a deficiency in his life. He had the ambition, but he lacked the sanctification. He possessed the zeal, but he lacked the spiritual knowledge. Look at the blunder he made in his attempt to advance the Kingdom of God in the Garden. A man named Malchus started to apprehend Jesus. In an impulsive moment, Peter whipped out his sword and struck at him and cut off his right ear. Jesus said, ***“Peter, put up thy sword.”*** Then Christ had to take time out to heal the ear of the wounded man with a divine touch. How often we have had to call a time out in the progress of the church and go to our knees and pray for Jesus to come and heal the gaping wounds left by

carnal church members who delight in lacerating the feelings of others.

It is interesting to notice the contrast between Christ and Peter. Christ was **heavenly minded**. Peter was **earthly minded**. Christ was **spiritual**. Peter was **carnal**. Christ was **strong**. Peter was **weak**. Christ was tempted in all points such as we are and yet without sin. He fell not. Peter was tempted and he fell. Peter was **forward**. Christ was **forgiving**. Peter was **selfishly** wrapped up in himself. Christ **sacrificially** opened himself to others. So at once from this contrast you can see the Kingdom of God consists of born again believers who are yet carnal. Their heads are too big for the front lines of the battle. Their bigheadedness is a sure target for the enemy. On the other hand, their hearts are too small, shriveled up with cowardice and compromise. The problem that plagues the church today is the fact we have too many cringing, cowardly, compromising church members who are afraid to come to the frontlines of the battles. Where are the prayer warriors of yester years who used to pray heaven and earth together? Where are the soldiers of the cross who used to get down in the trenches on their knees about the altar until the victory was won for Christ?

I am fearful, unless our people go on to holiness, when the battle grows thick and heavy, they will throw up the white flag of surrender, desert the ranks of the saved and go back to the side of Satan and betray Christ, the Captain of our Salvation.

Therefore, I urge you in the words of the Apostle, *“Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with the truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery arrows of the enemy. And take the helmet of salvation and the **SWORD** of the Spirit which is the Word of God, praying with all prayers and supplications in the Spirit.”*

What kind of a soldier are you in the Kingdom of God?

“Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb,

Shall I fail to own His cause or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?

While others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face, must I not stem the flood?

Is this vile world a friend to help me unto God?

Sure, I must fight if I would reign,

Increase my courage, Lord

I'll bear the toil, endure the pain

Supported by Thy Holy Word.

.....Isaac Watts

II. WEAPONS

*II Corinthians 10:4 Paul said, “The **WEAPONS** of our warfare are not carnal but mighty*

through God to pulling down the strongholds of Satan.”

The very fact Paul mentions “carnal weapons” indicates two types of weapons are being used in the Kingdom of God; carnal weapons and spiritual weapons, and the state of your soul will determine the choice of weapons you prefer to use. Unsanctified Christians will stoop to carnal weapons every time. Whereas, the sanctified will select spiritual weapons, without an exception. It is interesting to notice the contrast between the weapons of Peter and the weapons of Jesus Christ. Peter’s weapons were visible. They were harmful. They were carnal; the weapons of Jesus Christ were invisible. They were helpful. They were spiritual. The power of Christ’s weapons was attributed to the Holy Spirit, whereas the strength of Peter’s weapons was traceable to the human self, the arm of flesh. The sword that Peter bore always wields mortal death, but the word which Christ speaks yields eternal life. Therefore, the Word of God is preferred to Peter’s sword of steel. Peter’s sword of steel was only capable of cutting off the ears of Christ’s enemies. I suppose Peter could have cut off both the ears of Malchus. If I know anything about the temperament of Peter, he could have cut Malchus’ head off of his shoulders. Evidently, the Savior sensed this and intervened. Jesus knew it was easier to heal an ear than to replace a head. For the moment, let us suppose Peter had cut both the ears off of Malchus. Let us say he had cut his head from his shoulders. Would that sever the sins of hatred, jealousy, lust, racism and bigotry that reside within the human heart? Indeed not. Likewise, you can beat people with backbiting, club them with criticism, gouge them with gossip, ram them with rumor, slap them with sarcasm, stick them with slander, but these carnal methods will never convert them into soldiers of the cross. Let us throw down our clubs, sticks and swords and arm ourselves with the WORD of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Full possession of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying power is required of every born again soldier who comes into the Kingdom of God. You cannot efficiently implement the weapons of this warfare unless you have the Holy Spirit resident in your heart in sanctifying power. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word and sets it on fire. He energizes our faith. He permeates our praying. The Holy Spirit leads us from victory unto victory. It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.

PRAYER is a dynamic weapon in the hands of the sanctified Christian. Joshua prayed and the sun stopped in its orbit. Elijah prayed and the fire fell upon the altar sacrifice. Daniel prayed and stopped the mouths of lions. Paul and Silas prayed and the jail doors opened. What happens when we pray? Some have said, “I don’t know how to pray.” You are in great company. This was the confession of the Apostle Paul. ***Romans 8:26 Paul said, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit (there is the difference) maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”***

Wicked bloody Queen Mary said she feared the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of England. Why? Because John Knox was a Spirit-filled Christian, and his prayers proved to be more powerful than the armies of England. Any honest historian will tell you it was the revival preaching and singing of John and Charles Wesley that saved England from a bloody revolution.

A big bully accosted the minister and challenged him to a duel. Much to the surprise of the bully, the preacher accepted. The bully said, “Well, Reverend, since I have challenged you, then you have the choice of weapons. Which do you prefer, swords or pistols? Without batting an eyelash, the minister replied, “I suggest we fight it out with prayer and fasting.” Who do you suppose won that duel? The minister won, of course. But suppose he had been carnal and stooped to carnal weapons. There would have been bloodshed, or perhaps tragedy. But the sanctified are led by the Spirit and know what weapons to use in time of emergency.

MUSTARD SEED

Scientists boast of the fact they can demolish a large city through the medium of a nuclear energy compacted in bombs about the size of a baseball. But our God has given us a far superior weapon packaged in handfuls as small as a grain of **mustard seed** and with it we can remove mountains. What am I talking about? I am talking about faith. Jesus said **faith** as small as a grain of mustard seed can remove mountains. On the other hand, doubt can be as big as a Georgia peach seed and can't kick over an anthill. The Hebrew writer said, "**By faith the walls of Jericho came tumbling down after they were encompassed about for seven days.**" Some have said, "Would you mind explaining that?" It is self-explanatory. God's Word says it happened by **faith**. The scripture says, "**By faith the Red Sea opened up to the children of Israel and they walked through dry shod.**" Again, someone says, "Will you explain that?" It is self-explanatory. It happened by faith. The writer goes on to say, "**Time would fail me to tell you of the other prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, escaped the edge of the sword, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, put to flight the armies of the enemies.**" How did they do it? The Bible says, "**They did it by faith.**" This is a work of faith; you must believe God if you are going to see results. William James, a Christian philosopher said, "What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can receive."

WEAPON OF LOVE

There is one other weapon we must discuss before we get to the warfare of the Kingdom. It is the weapon of **LOVE**. It is to come into perfection. The Apostle John refers to it as **perfect love**. It is a precision-built weapon coming to us directly from the arsenal of the New Jerusalem. The instructions for using the weapon **LOVE** are found in **Romans 12:20**. **It reads, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."** Could somebody be thinking, "I would delight in dumping coals of fire on some person's head"? That is not what the Apostle had in mind. Instead, your experience of perfect love can wax so hot it will melt the armor of hate about your enemy and convert him into your friend. Anybody knows the best way to get rid of your enemies is to make friends out of them.

III. WARFARE

I have shown we enter the Kingdom of God by being born again of the Spirit. Next, we are to be entirely sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Now equipped with such dynamic weapons as the **INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD, PREVAILING PRAYER, OVERCOMING FAITH and PERFECT LOVE**, we enter into the **WARFARE** of the Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to follow Peter to the front lines of the battle. Before Peter was sanctified at Pentecost, he could not be trusted as a loyal soldier of the cross. He was up and down, in and out, rising and falling, repenting and backsliding. He didn't have time to evangelize the lost. He had to spend his time repressing the carnal nature within his unsanctified heart. After Peter was sanctified, he discarded the sword of steel and armed himself with the sword of the Spirit. He rushed to the front lines of the battle where you will find every sanctified soldier of the cross. Now – this thought has amused me. Had it been left up to the District Advisory Board on the Jerusalem District, Peter never would have been selected as the keynote speaker on the day of Pentecost. Be honest, knowing his public record before Pentecost, would you have voted for him? But God sees the potential in a man when he gets sanctified holy. Peter had no formal education and received no academic degrees. He was just an ordinary fisherman. What made the difference? God **called** him to be a minister. You may have talent, charisma, and educational degrees and decide you are going to be a minister. But if you have not been called of God to be a minister, then you are trespassing upon the authority of God. **Hebrews 5:4 says, "No man taketh this honor to himself, but only he who is called of God."** Ecclesiastical politicians may thwart

the purpose and the will of God for a time. Be patient, God will get his man there, even if he has to bury some people along the way. Peter was God's choice to preach at Pentecost. In his preaching he cut those sinners' hearts wide open. He got a cross sectional look at the sin and depravity within their hearts. They were pricked in their hearts. It is conviction that causes pain to your emotional nature. To put it in the words of contemporary critics, Peter laid a guilt trip on them. They cried out, "*What shall we do?*" Can you imagine Peter saying, "Just a minute, let me check my appointment book and see what hour I have free and we will arrange for a psychological consultation." I'm not here to debate psychology. I'm here to preach New Testament methods of evangelism. Sufficient to say, **repentance** is the only **remedy** to resolve the sin problem. Peter's answer to the question of the crowd? He shouted, "Repent." Perhaps someone is thinking, "How did that old-fashioned method work?" The record says 3,000 souls were saved. As Peter and the disciples preached, the inspired record says 5,000 men were converted.

The authorities arrested Peter for preaching Christ. He was released. As soon as he reached the streets, he continued preaching. They caught up with him and said, "*Did we not command you to no longer preach Christ?*" With a sanctified boldness, Peter said, "*We ought to obey God rather than man.*" They threw him back in jail. They said, "*Tomorrow we are going to cut your head off.*" Across town there was a cottage prayer meeting in progress. They were praying for Peter to be delivered from prison. Visualize this scene. Peter is in jail. They are going to chop his head off for preaching Christ. What is Peter doing? Pacing back and forth like an animal in a cage? No! Look at him. He is sound asleep. I wonder how many tranquilizers he took before he got settled down. How many sleeping pills did he swallow before he dozed off? What am I trying to show? There is a sanctified serenity of soul that rises when the pressure is on. On the other side of town, the people are praying for Peter to be delivered. In that prayer meeting there was a little damsel named Rhoda. She probably was a teenager. Teenagers have an important part in God's Kingdom. Rhoda was not only praying. She was watching and praying. This is scriptural. We are commanded to watch and pray. What does it mean to watch and pray? It means to pray and watch for the answered results. Rhoda was watching out the small window in the door. She saw Peter coming up the pathway. She got so excited she blurted out, "He's here! He's here!" "Sh! Sh! Quiet down! This is a prayer meeting, and we want things done in decency and order". As they continued, Rhoda couldn't contain herself. She shouted out again. "He is here! He is here!" "Now the rest of you people continue praying. Rhoda gets a little emotional and visionary when she prays". Once again Rhoda shouted, "But I tell you, he is here!" "Who is here"? Rhoda said, "It's Peter. He is coming up the pathway. Isn't he the reason we are having this prayer meeting, praying to get him out of jail? Well, here he is." Say, prayer meetings haven't changed much. You know what I am talking about. One of those hard cases everybody has given up on comes to revival. He rushes to the altar, repents and is saved. Some astonished church members say, "For goodness sake, how in the world did that happen? I didn't think he would come to the revival, much less come to the altar and get saved." It is no credit to you; that is for sure. I don't want to leave the impression our people don't pray. I have heard them pray, "O, Lord save the world." The world is in the worst condition than it has ever been in my lifetime. You can pray around the world and see no results. For results, you must target your praying. Simply pray, "O, Lord save Betty Brown." She might be covered up with work at the office, but when you call her name out to God in prayer, the Holy Spirit is there to convict her of her sins. Simply pray, "O, Lord save John Jones." He might be on the assembly line at the factory. But when you call his name to God in prayer, the Holy Spirit is there, convicting him of sin.

ROBERT K. SMITH

As a small boy, I sat on the front seat at the church. Robert K. Smith, returned missionary from Africa, was speaking. After the service, a saintly woman spoke to him. She said, "When I

learned you had gone to Africa, I have prayed for you every day.” She said, “There was one time when a heavy burden came upon me to pray for you”. She said, “I prayed and prayed and finally the burden lifted. I wrote the date down. Could you tell me if you were in any trouble at that time?” She handed him the date. He said, “I can’t tell you off the top of my head now.” He said, “I kept a diary of eventful things that happened.” He said, “I will check my diary and tell you in the service tomorrow night.” The next night he related this incident. He said their group was going through the jungle to reach another village. When they saw they couldn’t make it before nightfall, they stopped and pitched their tents. The ladies were preparing the evening meal. Robert Smith looked up and saw a herd of elephants at the edge of the clearing forming to stampede the camp. Robert Smith reached across a table for his rifle. In so doing, he knocked over the table containing pots and pans. It made a lot of noise. He expected the elephants to come charging at them. Instead they turned around and slowly walked away. At the time he believed it was an answer to prayer. Some thought the noise of the pots and pans scared the elephants away. The natives said the elephants would not be scared by the noise. They calculated the difference of time between America and Africa. They determined the same time the woman was on her knees praying, the elephants in Africa were walking away. Prayer is so powerful it cannot be limited by time or space.

I urge you to compare yourself with the truth of this message. Then I want you to ask yourself these searching questions:

1. What kind of a soldier am I in the Kingdom of God?
2. What kind of weapons have I been using in the Kingdom of God?
3. What is my record of soul winning in the warfare of the Kingdom of God?

About the Author



Dr. J. C. Crabtree devoted his entire ministry to full-time evangelism. He held an earned doctorate degree in theology. An honorary doctor of letters degree was conferred on him for literary excellence. He developed a methodology of preaching the doctrinal tenets of Christian theology derived from the implications disclosed in the narration of the Holy Scriptures. Dr. H. Orton Wiley referred to him as “The Theologian Evangelist”.

Dr. Crabtree was featured as the nightly speaker in the largest Indoor Camp in America with 200 churches cooperating. The crowds exceeded 60,000 in attendance. Dr. Crabtree’s unique “Voice of Evangelism” was heard in churches, camp meetings, colleges and universities in the Holiness Movement for sixty-five years.

Dr. Nelson S. Perdue, his friend and colleague in ministry, states:

“Dr. J.C. Crabtree traveled across our nation as an itinerant evangelist heralding the Gospel. He excelled in the presentation of scriptural holiness. He was not only clear in his teaching, but also cogent in his logic. His lifelong passion was to proclaim entire sanctification, which cleanses the heart from inbred sin and fills it with divine love.”