



**MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
(BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND).



**Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church**

Lord's Day Evening 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

*Series 'God's Covenant Heritage.'*

*No.11 "The Cultivation Of Holiness"*

Scripture Reading 1Corinthians Ch6:19-20

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

Before we consider the cultivation of Holiness the 'how', I believe it necessary for us to look again at the 'what' of sanctification. Any repetition is intentional and is intended for emphasis, God's people need to know why the bible commands us over three thousand times to pursue holiness and godliness, what does the imperative, "*Be ye Holy for I am holy*" mean?

We began by stating that in the life of the Christian there is a radical breaking of the power of sin followed by a never ending call to pursue a life of Holiness. The Christian is a new creation, the old has passed away and all things have become new. Through Christ and regeneration the conduct, will and motives are governed by a principle of Holiness. Holiness as a governing principle now reigns in the Christian, his mind and desires are holy. However, it remains that though made holy in the sight of God, the Christian is one who is not made sinlessly perfect, he still sins, but when he sins his sin is not the product of nature but the result of giving in to the temptations of the flesh. The Christian can never be forced to sin against his holy will, he can be tempted to sin against it and often does sin against it, but he can never be content to sin nor can he sin with the disclaimer, '*I cannot help myself sin.*' He desires to be free [Rom Ch7:25]. The biblical declaration of a Christian is one in whom the power and reign of sin has been broken, a new king reigns, a new kingdom has been established in the heart, though assaulted on a daily basis, that kingdom shall never fall, '*Sin shall never have dominion over me.*' That conclusion presents us with a very real challenge. The test of genuine conversion is our response to sin.

When a man commits sin, irrespective of whether he is a Christian or not, his sin can only be explained as being the conclusion of one of two propositions. (1) Either you want to sin [no conflict]. or (2) Your sin is always the result of giving in to the struggle with the flesh. It is only the Christian who struggles with remaining sin, he hates his sin, he finds no delight in sin, when he sins, he knows that this is not in accordance with the principle of holiness and grace within me! That establishes that remaining sin is the reason why the biblical imperatives are given, '*be holy*', '*defile not yourself*', '*make not provision for the flesh*' etc. The war with sin is finished in Christ, but battles still must be fought. Fighting sin is a lifelong conflict that we will be engaged in until in glory with Christ, holiness is a lifelong pursuit. In 1Cor Ch1:2, "*The Church of God...them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints.*" both the principle and progression of sanctification are set forth '*sanctified in Christ*', '*called to be saints.*' We have been sanctified by Christ, once for all, yet there remains the outward element of sanctification. God does not intend that we fight this battle without equipment, what do I use in my personal daily struggle with sin.

**1) A Daily Focusing upon the Person and work of Christ.** 1Cor Ch6:20, "*For ye are bought with a price.*"

The first thing a Christian must engage his whole being in, is a diligent contemplation of Christ and the work of redemption. 1Cor Ch6:20, the entire work of redemption is set before the Corinthians as a motivation to flee ungodliness.

i) Redemption. "*Know ye not?*" *How ignorant these Christians were of the simple truths of the gospel...*

Paul is thinking not so much of the soul as being redeemed by the blood, though it is, but the body through which remaining sin in the Christian expresses itself, it as well as the soul is the purchased possession of Christ. The Christian is one who is bought/redeemed body and soul. Christ's redemption extends to every part of our corporeal frame as well as the spiritual. Our hands are His, our mouth is His etc. Paul calls upon the Christian to consider Redemption as a primary reason for avoiding sin. All your sin [past, present, future] was paid for on a Roman cross. Contemplate the cost of your redemption! Before you would seek to find a moment of pleasure in that sin, consider the tremendous grief that Christ experienced at the very thought of bearing that sin. Plant the horrid scene of Golgotha between your eyes and that temptation to sin, and it will convert it into something ugly to be avoided. When the cross comes between me and my sin, sin loses its attractiveness, it becomes something to be abhorred and filthy. There is no stronger argument that the redeeming blood of Christ for you to pursue a holy life!

ii) Union With Christ. [v15], "*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?*" Rom Ch6:13

There was a clear failure to understand the doctrine of Union with Christ. When we were brought into union with Christ, body and soul were included. Our bodily members are members of Christ [we cannot fully

*"Humility may well be called the queen of Christian graces."  
...J.C Ryle...*

understand this truth see Eph Ch5:30, however, we cannot emphasize how close the bond is between Christ and His people]. One of the three mystical unions in scripture, the trinity, Christ's deity and humanity, Christ and His people. Paul's application is that before we contemplate sin, consider this fact of redemption, those bodies are united to Christ! that when we sin in our bodies, we implicate Christ in our sin, we implicate the habitation of the Holy Spirit [v16], "*Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?*" Bringing that which is holy into union with that which is impure! In v19 Paul rebukes them, "*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, ye are not your own, ye are bought [redeemed], [Pauline emphasis] therefore glorify God in your body.*" Rom Ch6:9, "*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*" Gents your eyes are not your own, they belong to Christ, ladies your body is not your own, to flaunt to a gazing, godless world, it belongs to Christ! Oh be careful little eye what you see etc. What the eye of the body sees the Spirit sees [1Cor Ch6:17, "*He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.*" You are obliged to stop and consider, I am not my own, my body mind and soul is joined to Christ, will my actions implicate [bring into an intimate connection] the Spirit of Christ and holiness?

**- The Unequal Yoke in the Context of 1 Cor Ch6 - [2Cor Ch6:14-17].**

The reason for not yoking yourself in an unequal relationship is not an issue of religious sectarianism! In that relationship you are uniting that which is holy with that which is unholy. Like positive and negative polarity pushing against one another! The strongest motivation for avoiding the unequal yoke, v16, "*ye are the temple of the living God, I dwell in them and walk in them...*" There is no justification for such a relationship, rather there is every motivation for avoiding such a bond. Courtship and marriage are not tools for evangelism! The illustration of Spurgeon and the unequal yoke standing on a desk trying to lift a person up, it is easier for the one on the floor to pull the other down! Relationships like all our actions are governed by our union to Christ!

- Questionable Activity. Clearly in 1Cor Ch6:12, sin was being defended by the argument, "*God has formed all things for our use, and there can be no evil if we use them.*" I believe that there were questionable practices [those not governed by a 'thou shalt not] going on in the Church at Corinth that were being defended. What was being said was, all things are permissible for our use, There are some guidelines that govern questionable practice (1) *Is it Beneficial*, not only physically, but spiritually? [1Cor Ch6:12]. (2) *Has it the power to bring me under control?* (3) *Has it the potential to inflict spiritual damage upon others [saved/unsaved]?* [1Cor Ch8:13]. (4) *Does it glorify God?* [1Cor Ch10:31]. "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" [1Thess Ch5:22]. Does it threaten to grieve the Holy Spirit of Christ in me? We must not only view the extent of Christ's redemption but we must see and understand the love of Christ in redemption, that will give a stimulus to our obligations to pursue Holiness and glorify Christ. When we speak of discipline it may sound like the promotion of spiritual bondage, disciplining ourselves in grace. It sounds like an oxymoron - Grace and Discipline! That is why I purposely had you consider the person of Christ. Holiness is not a mere obligation, it is an act of love for Christ. It is Christ that warms our affections and gives that stimulus.

**2) A Diligent, Disciplined and Meaningful Use of The Means of Grace.**

Our deployment in the conflict with indwelling sin means our perpetual employment of the means of Grace in sanctification. We are to be persistent and not sporadic e.g. youth weekends, conferences etc. You need to thinking of developing a habitual, purposeful, meaningful and diligent use of the means of grace.

**a) The Scriptures.** Christians need to pursue a regular healthy diet of the Word of God, I emphasis healthy, some diets are bad diets, a healthy intake, not a few verses followed by a few minutes thought, meditation, John Owen, '*If you would enlarge thy daily holiness, then enlarge thy daily use of the means of grace.*' The devil will always tell us that we are too busy, too tired, that suggests discipline! Find a suitable time, morning or evening, or midday, lunch hour in the car etc. our intake of God's word is not primarily reading, or hearing sermons but thinking...find the application [Bridges] Let us ask some questions in light of 1Cor Ch6:20 (1)What does this passage teach me? I am bought, I must glorify. (2) How does my life measure up to that particular scripture? It is or is not measuring up. (3) What steps must I take to obey this scripture? I must cut down on those things that leave me with a drained mind to pray! Think through the bible! The effect of meditation and filling of the heart/mind with the word is seen in Psalm 119:9-11.

*"Nothing more closely evidences an advance in the divine life as our growth in Humility of mind."  
...Octavius Winslow...*

i) Purifying Effect of The Word. [Psalm 119:9-11]. ‘*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse himself? By taking heed [guard, protect] according to thy word*’ [Psalm 119:9]. Young men and women are particularly liable to sins, to carnal lusts and sensual pleasures. David here relates how the young person may be delivered from the corruptions of the heart and the temptations of Satan to which he is exposed and lead a pure life. It is by governing himself/herself by the word of God, the young man or woman who makes the word of God the rule of his/her life will be kept from the strength of sin. David goes on to say, “*Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*” The presence of the word in the heart a sure guard against sin. Look at Psalm 37:31, “*The law of His God is in His heart, none of his steps shall slide.*” Fill you thoughts with the law of God, ‘*Thou shalt not*’ and the Spirit in you will use those meditations as an antidote for sin. Like dusting a shelf, we think we have it cleaned until the sunlight shines through the window and reveals just how much dust still remains. So it is when the light of the word shines upon us more and more of our sin is exposed.

b) Prayer. Consider prayer as a means of developing strength in the conflict with sin. Remaining sin is a primary reason for prayer, prayer is always with a view to overcoming sin, The sixth petition, Matt Ch6:13, “*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*” By overcoming sin I will glorify God, ‘*that thine may be all the glory Father, forever and ever amen.*’ Cultivate prayer young person, pray before you are tempted, pray when you are tempted and when you cave in to sinful temptations, Pray like David, Ps 51:10, “*Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me...restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me...*” David’s words imply that he had formerly known the happiness of being a friend of God, but that joy had been taken from him by his sin. He had lost his peace of mind. His soul was sad and cheerless. Sin always produces this effect. God is able to restore the joy that the season of disobedience has robbed you of!

c) The Sacraments. [Baptism Lord’s Supper].

Never see your baptism as something without an instructive purpose, something that happens and is forgotten. What does my baptism signify? - my union to Christ. A meaningful application of the Lord’s table, in faith partake often of all the benefits of Christ’s death! Be humbled under the command of Christ, unworthy though you are, eat at my table!

d) Seek Godly Companions.

Seek Godly friends those who will be a help to you. Observe those in your congregation who are seen to be mature and godly, befriend them, find out what makes them tick! Prov Ch27:17, “*Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*” Provide yourself with good books that feed the soul, ask your pastor and elders...as Paul says those who have matured on the meat of the gospel and have exercised their senses in discerning good and evil, have them recommend books to you on given subjects. View your minister as a help to holiness, that will delight his soul, he will delight to have you as a friend that sharpens his countenance! Holy conversation among holy friends stirs up the gifts within us and sharpens the graces of holy thinking and meditation - that will be seen on the countenance [face]!

3) The End of Holiness. [Joy] John Ch15:10-11, “*These things have I spoken that your joy might be full.*”

There are those today who caricature a life of holiness as something doleful and joyless. The holy person is a happy person, the antithesis is true also, the backslidden Christian is more miserable than the unregenerate! If you have disfellowshipped yourself from God repent of your backslidings and experience the joy of Communion with God once again. I repeat again that God is able to restore the joy that the season of disobedience has taken from you, Jude vv.24, “*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.*” God says, Hebrews Ch6:12, “*Be ye not slothful...*” but “*Exercise thyself unto godliness.*” 1Tim Ch4:7.

By. Paul Thompson.

*“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”*

Hebrews 10:16

