

What is Holiness?

A Sermon by Rolfe Barnard

"And she shall bring forth a Son, and though shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Christ died to make men H-O-L-Y, holy. Salvation is in Christ; it's in Him, not in what He did apart from Who He is. I believe the most damning fundamental preaching that is taking place in the Southland today is the preaching that leads people to think they have an interest in the death of Christ, without being vitally joined together to Him in their daily walk. We've been preaching salvation through a representative that we never came into contact with. I want to lift a voice from time to time to say that you cannot have any interest in or blessings from the perfect life and glorious death and resurrection and present intercession of our Lord, except as you are vitally and really and experientially and actually joined to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The limit of His salvation is found in Matthew 1:21, "For He shall save His people from their sins." The only way on earth that the Lord Jesus Christ could become the Substitute and die instead of anybody else was to be vitally and spiritually and legally under the law of God, joined to that person — and such people are His by the Divine decree of Almighty God. It is silly to talk about Christ dying in a man's stead, unless that person has been joined to the Lord positionally before there was ever a star. The Lord's salvation is limited by the purpose and wisdom and love and character of Almighty God. And everything that God sent His Son to do, He did. And every purpose that God has toward man is being and will be carried out! Eph. 1:4-6: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

It is high time that somebody warned this generation of preachers who dare place their little finite mind against the wisdom of God, and make fun of and sneer at the glorious truth that God is a God of purpose, and that the work of His blessed Son is simply limited by the purpose of God had in it — 2Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

A young fellow told me the other day that he believed in the glorious doctrine that Jesus died for a people, not to get a people, but for a people who are already given to Him by the Father (John 6:37,65). But he said, "If I preached that in my church, it would tear my

church into pieces." I said, "Yes, it will tear your church into pieces," and I further said, "Young man, I am sick and tired of hearing little two-bit preachers call an institution that Jesus gave His blood to purchase theirs; it isn't your church, son, it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. And there isn't any truth in the Bible that will split God's Church. There is not a truth in the Bible that will split a church that was given to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Father." Now I want to be charitable, but we must stand for truth!

I was talking to a young preacher this week and he said, "Brother Barnard, I haven't got a deacon in my church and I haven't got a single young lady in my church that doesn't spend Saturday night till 3 or 4 o'clock Sunday morning on the dance floors. Then they come up and act like deacons." I didn't say anything. Not a deacon in a Baptist church (in this state) that doesn't spend Saturday night till Sunday morning on the dance floors hugging someone else's wife! I wanted to say, "Son, the preaching that makes salvation depend on the feeble decision of a dead man's will turns out that kind of church members, but the preaching that shuts men and women up to the truth that God Almighty is not going to try to improve their old wicked hearts, for their hearts are represented in the Scripture as incurable sickness — the only thing that God is going to do is to deal it a death blow and give Rolfe Barnard a new nature — and in that new nature the principle of holiness is planted within the heart of an old rotten sinner.

Ezekiel 11:19-20, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you; and I will take out the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

We want to show how the Holy Spirit baptized and identified His people in the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that everybody who is ever saved gets in the family of God by being born of the Spirit just as supernaturally, and just as miraculously as the Lord Jesus Christ was born out of the womb of Mary. The most humbling thing I ever faced in the Word of God is how the Holy Spirit planted a Divine Seed in the womb of a natural woman and out of that brought a Holy Thing. That is exactly what regeneration is: the implantation of the Divine Nature of God in the old dirty cesspool heart of Rolfe Barnard shall come that which is holy, a new nature that, Bless God, will result in a new way of walking that is pleasing to God. Did you get it? I want you to hear this.

That brings me to my subject, "What is Holiness?" Christ came to make us holy. That song, "Christ Hath Died to Make Men Holy" — they got it out of the Scriptures. Christ did die to make men holy. Christ died so that sin should no longer lord it over us. Romans 6:11-14: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Christ died not only that we might be reckoned perfect, as God looks on us in Him, but Christ died that our lives should be lives of daily victory over sin. Praise God, when a man is born again, the power of sin has been broken, and sin can't lord over that child of God anymore. That is all in the purpose of God. There isn't anything about which there is more ignorance than what Bible holiness is. And yet there isn't anything that is closer to the heart of God or the heart of the Gospel than this simple statement: Christ didn't come down here to save people from Hell; but He came down here to make a people who have been given Him by the Father — to make them where they might live like kings! Romans 5:21: "That as sin hath reigned unto death (sin was King), even so might grace reign (grace is now King) through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Bless the Lord, the reason my Lord came down here was so that His people would be delivered from king sin unto King Grace, and that grace should so revolutionize sinful men, that men would reign lording it over sin, instead of sin reigning over us - overruling, overcoming, instead of being defeated — That Grace Might Reign.

Somebody preached half of the Gospel — justification and left off sanctification. That isn't so; that Gospel that stops at justification is not the Gospel! The book of Romans can't be divided. You listen to me: that Gospel which says that Jesus Christ through His death declares men and women to be righteous when they are not righteous, is *not* what the book of Romans teaches. The Book of Romans teaches that the way God saves a sinner is that He makes a man righteous. He doesn't declare anything about it, He doesn't fill up heaven with people that God says are righteous when they aren't. But the Gospel received, embraced, believed and experienced in the life of an individual not only constitutes him just in the sight of the Law of God, but it also constitutes him righteous before God.

First, Did you know that Jesus Christ cannot save anybody except a righteous man? A man must be *counted* righteous, but that righteousness that we are talking about now is *IMPLANTED HOLINESS*.

Some years ago I was asked to preach in another denomination. They said, "We want you to bring your messages on the grace of God." And I said, "I don't believe your people will stand my preaching." "Oh, yes we will!" I held four or five meetings in their churches and they found out that I was right, because every time I preached what I believe is truth, it offended the very heart of their doctrinal belief. There were people who are fond of using the expression, "We are saved and sanctified," and I wouldn't use that expression. I said that expression was of the devil, that it dishonors Christ and that expression de-hearts the Gospel. I said, "If you would use the term, justified and sanctified, then you would have the Gospel."

Why is it that several denominations, including nearly all Baptists now, have just preached a Gospel and said that was God justifying a sinner? I'll tell you why, because the heart of the whole thing is founded in the purpose of God's election of a sinner to start with. Ephesians 1:4: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,

that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." That's the offense of the cross now. Anybody on earth can keep a bunch of unsaved church members putting the tithe in the "storehouse" to promote a program, if you will continue to preach that God Almighty considers men and women to be His apart from working holiness in their daily experience. That's right. That is the reason some denominations say, "I am saved all right, but I'm carnal." Some Baptists say, "I'm a carnal Christian." I've heard the expression, "He is saved, but not separated." I hear the expression, "He is saved but he is not walking with the Lord." Some say, "He is saved, but not living right." My soul, they have fixed it so that salvation doesn't mean a thing now!

I don't know much — and I am studying the Bible hard because of the little I do know — but if I could do what God knows I want to do, I would lift up this little old voice of mine, and I would attack and fight and do everything I could to put out of business anything on earth that detracts from the glorious Truth (as flesh-killing as it is!) that my Lord Jesus Christ came down here to confound the devil by demonstrating what holy lives could be lived by men and women who are the products and the beneficiaries of the saving grace of God!

The Scriptures tell us that in saving sinner God has two motives: First, it redounds to the praise of the glory of His grace. That's in Heaven. Secondly, His motive is to confound the devil down here in this world. 1 Corinthians 1:27, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." He is going to show the principalities, and everybody, and going to put them to an open shame. How? By talking an old sinner in the pit of corruption, and redeeming him by the blood, regenerating him by the Spirit and growing him by the grace of God until that sinner is a walking demonstration of the fact that God is holy.

In Hebrews 12:14 the Scriptures say, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." ... He is not talking about the imputed holiness that we have in Christ Jesus — which is our only hope of salvation, and in nothing we can do but — it doesn't say without holiness a man shall not be saved, but it does say without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Any Bible student will tell you that the "see" in this connection means, "without holiness you can't have any fellowship with Him, you can't commune with Him, you can't worship Him." And I said that without daily practical devotion to the will of God, which is holiness in your life, you can't have one thing from God Almighty. Do you get what I'm saying? We are constituted perfectly holy in Christ, and through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God we gradually and constantly from grace to grace, from faith to faith, grow NOT TO BE MORE HOLY, but GROW in holiness.

A man doesn't become more holy; he is either holy or unholy. An unsaved man is absolutely unholy; a saved man is absolutely holy. But we do grow, not toward holiness but in holiness — that is, we develop. I am going to show you that this word HOLINESS in Hebrews 12:14 is not the imputed righteousness that we have in Christ, not the growing in

holiness, but it is talking about the way you live. And the Scriptures say that without your experience of what you call salvation developing in your life the habit of obedience to the will of God, which is holiness, then you can't have anything from the Lord. If that is so, God help us — if that is so, that is a challenge. Will you let Brother Barnard help you tonight? We are chosen unto holiness. To call one's self a saved person while living in sin and enmity to God is downright foolishness. 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

And a man who calls himself a child of God who does not have the *one evidence* that the work of grace is real in the heart, and that evidence is practical obedience to the will of God — a man who doesn't have that evidence, doesn't have *any* evidence! That *is* the evidence that God saved you; that is the evidence that you are one of God's children. This is working in your life. Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in Heaven. Without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Christ here. Without holiness no man can serve God, now or later! Without holiness no man can have fellowship with God now or then. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be made holy.

II. ***What then is Bible holiness?*** *It is not heathen asceticism; it is not that you draw off from the world.* It is not that you get down like Elijah under the juniper tree and everybody is wrong but you. It is not the absence of something. Bible holiness is not pharisaical self-righteousness. Listen to Rolfe Barnard tonight! Any man on earth that sets himself up to judge the other fellow as to what makes him tick shows that he is an unsaved Pharisee, and he has never seen his own rotten heart! And you never did get saved without a look at your own rottenness, did you? And if you have ever seen yourself in the mirror of God Almighty's holiness, you never saw a man that you didn't think was better than you.

It is not pharisaical self-righteousness. If there was anything my Lord hated, it was the fellow that was always talking about "I DO THIS" and "I DO THAT!" Ah! He never had a kind word for that fellow who had such a small glimpse of God that he had a good opinion of himself. It is dead certain that the greatest saint of God you ever met had the most terrible opinion of himself, and he experienced something like Paul who started out by being just an apostle but would up by saying he was "the least of the apostles." And by the time he was old man, he said he was the "chief of sinners." It was simply because the closer you walk with God, the blacker he saw himself. The more he saw perfection in Christ, the more he saw of the imperfection of his life. It's not advertising that your life has been touched by the grace of God if you have a high opinion of yourself. That's right.

The old timer that watched them take a poor fellow out and hang him — the old preacher who said, "There but for the grace of God go I," he was pretty near the truth. Dear ones, will you let me tell you something? The reason we are going to have the Lord's Supper, the Lord willing, here *every* Lord's Day, if we don't have anything else, is because this

generation of church people have hearts as hard as flint.

Do you know why they have a good opinion of themselves? It is because they do not come often and sit before those elements until Christ is real there, and they see once again their sinful condition was so desperate, their wickedness was so enormous — Oh, their hearts were so black — that it took the life laid down and the blood pouring out of the Son of God to keep them out of Hell! And that will break the heart of anybody that's got a heart in him, and it will keep us thinking less of ourselves and more about HIM. That is our greatest need today.

III. *Bible holiness is not negative separation from the world*, but it is the opposite of sinfulness; and sin is violation of or lack of conformity to God's Holy Law. Therefore holiness is obedience to God's revealed will as expressed in His Holy Law. And the whole Word of the Law is expressed in one word, L-O-V-E, love. And a man is just as holy in practical language as the Law of God is being revealed, honored and magnified in his life. Did you get it? *This is a lawless generation*. It seems to me that most people who call themselves "preachers of God's grace" preach this: That God used to be tough, and He made it hard to get saved, but He found out that wouldn't work so under grace He found an easy way to keep people out of Hell.

But there is nothing further from the truth than that. The grace of God is God Almighty fixing an old sinner where the righteousness of the Law will be fulfilled in the life of the soul that comes to the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation. This is a lawless age. Somebody told us that Sunday wasn't a Sabbath Day, so these so-called "Christians" do as they please on the Lord's Day. I am telling you that you better quit running around here talking about the grace of God, if you are using it so you can disobey God's truth and disobey God's will and live disobediently to His holy requirements. I read in the Bible of a sanctifying grace that teaches us how to live. In Titus 2:12-14 we read, "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Holiness is obedience to the will of God. Somebody asked me, "What do you teach about giving? Do you teach tithing in the storehouse?" I said, "No; I teach the *grace* of giving." 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." I just tell people you better quit talking about the grace of God, if it makes you the kind of fellow that is trying to find a shortcut to obedience. You better quit calling yourself a Christian if this isn't your attitude — you are trying to find out what God wants you to do. You mean to tell me God's people are trying to find a way to cheat Him? No, not *God's* people! You mean to tell me you wait on a preacher to tell you what to do? You mean to tell me that you call yourself a Christian and adopt a legalistic principle that you honor God by dividing a little of your income with Him. No. No. I am not going to teach that you have got to be loyal to the

Church — I hate that — just loyal to *Christ*. I am saying it is time we start telling the truth about what the grace of God does for man. It won't make a lawless rebel out of him; it won't make people want to find out how little they can do and get by with it! No, sir!

IV. *What is holiness? It is obedience to the will of God as expressed in His Holy Law.* Now no one is a Christian who doesn't have this attitude. I remember years ago two men professed to be saved under my ministry when I was a pastor out in New Mexico. The next week one of them came to see me and said, "What should a fellow do about his money?" I said, "I don't know, what do you want to do?" He said, "I want to do what the Lord wants me to do." So I told him to buy a Bible and see if he could find anything in Scripture about it. When a person has been touched by the grace of God, and his heart wants to do the will of God, we have no fear to turn him loose with a Bible to see what he can find in there and do it.

What is holiness? Better than thou? No. No. Christian profession? No. No. You are the biggest fool this side of Hell if you haven't found out that your best righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight, according to Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." Ah, that person who thinks he has arrived where he is above sin, he has arrived at it by calling what he does a "mistake" instead of *sin*, and by whittling down the holy character of God. Wait a minute! Most of us are not suffering from claiming we are perfect; most of us are suffering for using the grace of God so we can live selfish lives, and say we are "not under Law but under grace."

An old preacher said this, "No one is a Christian who does not seek perfection; not to seek to be perfect is to consent to live in sin." Did you get that? If you don't want to be perfect, it means you are willing to live in sin. You mean to tell me there is a child of God who is willing to live in sin? It can't be! When you were regenerated, a principle was put in you that made you hate sin with all your heart. And it is a whole lot worse to defend sin than it is to commit it. You may be overtaken in a moment of weakness, but then when you deliberately do like David did and try to cover it up, that's a whole lot worse, isn't it? To be willing to live in sin is certainly showing that you have never known the grace of God. It is the genuine desire and resolution and endeavor of the child of God to please Christ in all that he does. This generation wants to go to Heaven, but they don't want to obey God! They don't want to walk with God. Did you get that?

My Lord Jesus came down here to change the disposition of sinful men, and make them not only want to escape Hell but to walk with the Lord. All that is in the work of my Christ, and let me give you three things that God Almighty gives when He saves a sinner.

First, He gives the gift of the Spirit. It was not simply agreed within the Godhead that Christ Jesus would come down here and die on the cross. But a Covenant was made before the foundation of the world that not only would He die for sinners, but He would purchase for them the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of saving faith, and that He would purchase for them the gift of saving repentance — and it's all in Christ Jesus! There isn't anything on

earth that makes my blood boil any more than to constantly hear men and women talk about coming to Christ, and never honor God by using such simple language as something like this: "Praise God, I was *enabled* to lay hold on Christ!" That's the way old time Baptists used to talk. Now they say, "I took Jesus." They used to say, "I was enabled by the Holy Spirit to turn from myself to God, to turn from serving self to lay hold of Christ." And they cease not to honor Christ, and give Him all the glory. I could listen to present-day preaching now and never know there was a Holy Ghost, never know that the Lord was a God of purpose, never know that God had anything to do with salvation!

I long to hear the old language repeated that poor old Rolfe Barnard was laid hold of by the Holy Spirit, arrested by God Almighty, stopped on his mad road to Hell, and enabled to repent of his sins and lay hold on Jesus Christ. That's right. In saving a sinner, Christ purchased the gift of the Spirit. Romans 10:17: "So faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." But that is not apart from the illuminating work of the Holy Ghost. There will be a lot of people in Hell who read the Bible and believed every word of it in their heads. That isn't the way it works. Watch it! Not only did Christ purchase for us the gift of the Holy Spirit to convict us, to regenerate us, to slay the enmity in us, and to make us delight in His Holy Law, but He took upon Himself our curse. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He endured the penalty of the righteous law.

In the last place, my Lord Jesus Christ in saving a sinner empowers that sinner to walk in holy obedience to the Lord. The only way on earth that I ever found out that I was a lost church member was I kept facing the fact that I had no power *in here* [pointing to his chest] to live for Jesus Christ. I tried to, I taught Sunday School class, I did this, I did that and I did the other. I was constantly brought face to face with the truth that my Lord Jesus Christ came down here not to make a mockery — He didn't come down here by regeneration to make Rolfe Barnard hate sin and yet doom him to be enslaved and overcome by it every day of his life. He didn't come down here to regenerate me and plant something in me that longed to be holy, without giving me the power inside whereby practical holiness could be a truth in my life! Bless God, He came down here not to make fun of us, but to liberate us and empower us that the righteous demands of God's Holy Law might be fulfilled in us. Did you get it?

When I was a student at **Southwestern Baptist Seminary**, Dr. M.E. Dodd (pastor in Shreveport, LA at the time) came and preached a week. I was a young preacher then. I remember the story that he told and I want to close with this illustration. Dr. Dodd was hit by an automobile years ago and he had hovered at the brink of death for six or seven weeks. People all over the South were asked to pray for him. Then he was just getting over this when he came to speak for us and told us his experience. He said while he was in the hospital after he came back from the very brink of death, the nurse was gone, and all the visitors were out, the door being half open somebody came and knocked on the door and he said, "Come in." A little nine-year-old boy with a little bunch of violets in his hand, holding them so tightly they already started to wilt, came in. He came up to my bed, Dr.

Dodd said, and I could tell he had his speech memorized. He said, "Dr. Dodd, my mother sent me to give you these violets, 'cause we love you, 'cause you done so much for us."

And he said, I took the violets and visited with the little boy a while. I didn't know who he was but I wouldn't let him know. I thanked him for the violets and thought about what was behind it. God was good to me, he said, and the little boy's face came back to me and I remembered the day before I was hit by a car; I was walking down the street of my city and it was zero weather. I heard the little boy say, "Paper mister, paper mister." And I saw this little boy, his face, his face was blue and his teeth were chattering and he was standing out there with no stockings on, and a shirt but no coat. He just had a little bundle of papers and was about to freeze to death. I went up to him and began to talk to him, and I saw that he was awfully cold. So I bought all his papers and took him by the hand, and he took me to his home. He took me to a little old shack out behind some of the stores, and there on a straw mat his mother lay sick with the flu, and a little year-old baby screaming because there was no milk. There wasn't a fire in the house, all the coal and wood was gone.

There wasn't a bite to eat or a drop of milk. This widow made a living washing and she had been down for two weeks with the flu and nobody had found it out. So the little boy had been out on the street corner trying to sell a few papers to buy them some milk for the baby. He said, "'I called up some people and they brought some coal and some cover, and somebody brought the doctor and some brought groceries and we got things all fixed up. So I went on my way, and the next day I went down and took dinner with them. The woman was over the flu and there was a fire in the stove, and the little baby was full of milk, and everybody was happy, so I stayed and had dinner with them. We had a glorious time, then I went on my way and that afternoon a car hit me and for weeks I was between Heaven and this old earth.'" Then He said, "I had forgotten about it, then that little boy came in and said, 'Dr. Dodd, my mother sent me to give you these violets, because we love you, 'cause you done so much for us.' Then I looked at those violets and I thought of all that was behind it and (he said) I began to weep, and there on my hospital bed I got converted all over again." (It kinda helps to, every once in a while.)

And he said, "Lord, Lord, I love you, I love you, I love you ... when I was a little 13 year old boy down on an old split rail fence like they used to have in the country, You touched my heart by Your grace and saved me; You called me to preach; You have ministered to me. Lord, I love you; Lord, I love you; Lord, I love you!"

Then Dr. Dodd said, "Lord, all over again, one more time, here is this old broken body of this Baptist preacher. Lord, I want You to have me, 'cause I love You, because You have done so much for me!" Anybody that comes into a relationship with the Lord like that, I'll turn you loose with a Bible to see what is in it, and put it into practice. Amen! "*Lord, I do love You! Lord, I do love You!*" □□□

By the late Evangelist Rolfe Barnard (1904-1969), preached under the old Gospel Tent in a rainstorm in Winston Salem, NC, circa 1959