

Holiness

(Notes from lesson delivered to Officers)

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It is not my intention today to discuss or debate with you the doctrine of holiness or to trace it's development within The Salvation Army from the Wesleyan perspective through to the Pentecostal-type emphasis.

You will be aware of many of the explanations of the doctrine of holiness that has exercised the heart and mind of believers for centuries and that cover a broad range of convictions.

For example –

- No one is Christian without the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life. (St. John 16:7-10. Romans 8:16. Galatians 4:6)
- The Holy Spirit brings life and power to the believer that makes holiness possible and actual. (Galatians 5:22-26)
- Holiness is both a crisis and a process. Initial surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Ongoing openness to the work of the Spirit. (Colossians 2:6-7)
- Full salvation. Fully given to God. Fully receptive to His Spirit. (2nd.Corinthians 3:18)
- The second blessing. 1st.Thessalonians 5:23-24)

Theological reflection and personal experience, an ongoing awareness of God in the life leads us to the conviction of our need to be holy and to be constantly open to the all-pervasive work of the Holy Spirit.

As a young Salvationist, sometimes confused by the terminology applied to the blessing of holiness, God broke through my confusion and spoke to me clearly from Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart”.

“When you come looking for Me, you’ll find Me. Yes, when you get serious about finding Me and want it more than anything else, I’ll make sure you won’t be disappointed” (The Message).

I had sought the Lord. I knew forgiveness of sin but had to “get serious about finding Him and want Him above anything else” I want you to know that, true to His Word, God has never disappointed me!

For me the real test of the holy life is the witness of consistent Christlike action and reaction. It is the fruit of the Spirit seen in everyday action that witnesses to the reality of faith in community.

“Love , joy , peace , longsuffering , gentleness , goodness , faith , meekness , temperance” . (Galatians 5: 22-23)

Capture and write down a sentence, phrase or statement that speaks to you of holiness.SHARE.

When I entered the Training College as a Cadet then we were required to have all the items mentioned on the “official outfit list”. Not only books, study material, uniforms but all manner of other clothing items and toiletries etc. necessary to see one through the period of training.

As I reflected on that and my life of ministry since then I wish that the “outfit list” of holiness summarised in Colossians 3: 12-17 had been emphasised.

Let us look at this life of holiness list together. We will read from NIV and The Message So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe (the life of holiness), God has designed for you.

1 .Compassion. The quality of holy living that goes beyond cold sympathy to the action of love. Our Lord Christ sets the example here. (St. Mark 1: 29 – 34)
The compassion of Jesus was not only for the sick of body but also for the spiritually unresponsive. (St. Luke 13: 34. St. Matthew 9: 36 – 38)

Sometimes the constancy, the demands of ministry and service can ‘dry up’ Holy Spirit compassion and in this we need the ministry of the Spirit personally.
A few years ago we sang a chorus that seems to sum up this thought –
True happiness is love expressed in service;
True holiness compassion deep and strong.
In giving up my best I find contentment
And so forget how hard the way and long.

2. Kindness or the disposition to share God’s goodness with others. Kindness is grace in action. Kindness gives hands and feet to grace .It does not begrudge acts of mercy but lives out the challenge of Micah 6: 6-8.

If kindness is ever administered out of duty alone then it fails to honour God or reflect holiness in action.

3. Humility. Here is an attitude of heart to be cultivated by God the Holy Spirit. A quality only possible when the Lordship of Christ is central in the life. Humility enables self to be put aside for the glory of God in daily life. (Philippians 2: 3 – 5)

Humility will not seek the recognition of place, power or position but will rather see in them then challenge of servanthood.

4. Gentleness. Someone has described gentleness as “strength under control” or “quiet strength” as The Message translates.

Gentleness is not to be equated with weakness for it sometimes requires me to be tough as well as tender.

Under the control and indwelling of the Holy Spirit then gentleness will temper one's personality that could be abrupt and hurtful and reflect the spirit of Jesus in relationships.

Humility and gentleness are powerful forces in the witness of the gospel and speak strongly of the transforming work of the Spirit.

5. Patience. The quality of heart and life that speaks of discipline in personal living and behaviour. Patience helps us to discover the best in others and to be part of their spiritual walk.

Patience in the life of the Christian leader witnesses to the release of grace touching the lives of those to whom we minister and we are called to serve.

6. Tolerance. "Bear with each other". Don't be quick to judge those who are different in approach to life and spiritual issues than you might be. It could well be that the Holy Spirit wants to teach you something through them!

The household of faith contains a great diversity of personality, approach, maturity, gifting and talents but we are to be tolerant of each other, to "bear with each other in love"

Not dismissively!

Not patronisingly!

Not with 'clenched teeth'

Not as a burden – but in love.

7. A forgiving spirit. Forgiveness is one of the cardinal rules of Christian action and the bench mark is high – "AS THE LORD FORGAVE YOU". The message challenges "Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you".

What a breathtaking quality of the Holy Spirit!

How God must weep over His people, His Church, when so much time, energy and effort is put into harbouring an unforgiving spirit.

How challenging is the Lord's Prayer when we consider this Holy Spirit quality of forgiveness. "Forgive us our debts (trespasses) as we also have forgiven our debtors (those who trespass against us) (St. Matthew 6: 12).

In the life of the Spirit forgiveness does not wait to apportion blame or necessarily to expect apology but rather to reveal the attitude of Jesus in the unconditional action of forgiveness.

This may involve the Church, the organization, a leader or leadership plural, an individual or group but forgiveness does not discriminate!

8. Above all put on love. 'Regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it'. (The Message)

