

A summary of the book...

## **“HOLINESS”**

by **J. C. Ryle**  
(1816–1900)

**Bishop J. C. Ryle’s “Holiness” is one of the finest theological works ever written.** Ryle wrote “*Holiness*” in 1877 to answer some fashionable and dangerous teachings about sanctification, the Christian’s struggle with sin, and the so-called deeper life. By the second half of the nineteenth century several varieties of perfectionist and second-blessing doctrines had been gradually gaining grass-root popularity in evangelical circles around the world — **John Wesley** taught “complete sanctification;” **Charles Finney** taught “perfectionism;” **Robert Pearsall Smith** taught “perfectionism;” and **Hannah Whitall Smith** taught a toned-down “Wesleyan perfectionism combined with Quaker quietism;” the believer’s only duty is to trust God and rest in the Lord; the key words were *surrender, yield, trust, and rest*. Smith’s deeper-life teaching emphatically denied that sanctification entails any kind of *struggle* – victory was characterized as life on a “higher spiritual plane” where temptation would cease to trouble the consecrated person. But Scripture never speaks in such terms – we are commanded to “flee” and “resist” (1 Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Jam 4:7). The same year Mrs. Smith’s book was published, the “**Keswick Convention**” was founded in England to promote a similar view of holiness. Again, these are “*totally passive*” approaches to sanctification which essentially promise an easy, instant pathway to victory over all known sin. The movement can be summed in the slogan, “*Let go and let God.*” Sadly, the errors of this movement are still causing much confusion today in evangelical circles. (7-14)

**J. C. Ryle was born into privilege (his father inherited a fortune); he attended Oxford University.** John Charles Ryle’s hopes for a career in public service were shattered when his family lost their fortune “overnight.” He was ordained as a minister in the “Church of England” in 1841 at the age of 25 – he became a prolific writer of tracts that were wildly popular.

**He who wishes to attain right views about “Christian holiness,”** says Ryle, must begin with the subject of SIN. Wrong views about holiness are almost always traceable to wrong views about “*human corruption.*” Sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of man; as such, man is inclined to evil... every human being inherits a heart and nature inclined to evil. Jeremiah writes, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (17:9). A “sin” consists in doing, saying, thinking, imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. Says John, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn 3:4) – the slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character constitutes a sin. A man may break God’s law in heart and thought, when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Even a poet of our own has truly said, “*A man may smile and still be a villain.*” Furthermore, there are sins of omission and sins of commission... and things we ought to do, and things we ought not to do. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, and the will are all more or less infected. So deeply planted are the roots of human corruption, that even after we are born again, these roots remain alive in the bottom of our hearts, and we never get rid of them until we exit our bodies into eternity.

**Sin in the believer’s heart no longer has “dominion” over him,** because the “*principle of grace*” now rules in him; therefore sin is checked, controlled and crucified. One of the problems men have is that they regard sin as “less sinful and dangerous” than it is in the sight of God – they make excuses for it, minimize its guilt, and question its awfulness. Where is the mighty harm? Sin comes to us like Judas with a kiss –

the “forbidden fruit” seemed good and desirable to Eve, yet it cast her out of Eden. David’s walking idly on his palace roof seemed harmless enough, yet it ended in adultery and murder. Sin rarely seems sin in the beginning. How true it is that the “holiest saint” is in himself a miserable sinner to the last moment of his existence. **Richard Hooker**, a 16<sup>th</sup> century English theologian who strongly influenced the development of the Church of England, says, “Search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam, find one man that hath done one action which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all – *the best things we do all have something within them that needs to be pardoned.*” For my part, I am persuaded the more light we have, the more we see our own sinfulness, and the more we are clothed in humility. Let us not be ashamed to confess plainly our *state of imperfection* – it is simply admitting reality. (15-44)

**The subject of “sanctification” is of outmost importance to our souls.** Sanctification is that inward spiritual work that God works in the soul of man by the *Holy Spirit*. The instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the *Word of God*, though He sometimes uses afflictions and providential visitations (1 Pet 3:1). Scripture, Prayer, Meditation, Sermons, Public Worship, and the Lord’s Table are the appointed channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys fresh supplies of grace to the soul, and strengthens the work that He has begun in the inward man – furthermore, there are “no spiritual gains without pains.” *Our God is a God who works by “means.”* A true Christian is one who has not only peace of conscience, but war within – thus believers must not feel they are *not sanctified* because they experience great inward struggle. Such freedom we shall have in heaven, but not here in this world. The heart of the best Christian, even at his best, is a field occupied by two rival camps, and the “*company of two armies*” (Song of Sol 6:13; Gal 5:17).

**The holiest actions of the holiest saint who ever lived are all more or less full of “defects and imperfections.”** To suppose that such actions can stand the severity of God’s judgment, atone for sin, and merit heaven, is simply absurd. “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Rom 3:20-28). For all this, however, the Bible distinctly teaches that the holy actions of a sanctified man, although imperfect, are pleasing in the sight of God – “with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). Just as a parent is pleased with the efforts of his little child to please him, though it be only by picking a daisy or walking across a room, so is our Father in heaven pleased with the *less than perfect performances* of His believing children – He looks at the motive, principle, and intention of their actions, and not merely at their quantity and quality. (45-57)

**Thousands of Christians have buried themselves in some wilderness “monastery”** under the vain idea that by doing so they would escape sin and become eminently holy. *They forgot that wherever they went, they carried the “root of evil” with them in their own heart.* True holiness does not make a Christian evade difficulties, but face and overcome them. Christ would have His people show that His grace is not a mere greenhouse plant, which can only thrive under some kind of shelter, but a strong, hardy thing, which can flourish in any relational climate. It is doing our duty in that state to which God has called us – like salt in the midst of corruption, and light in the midst of darkness – which is a primary element in sanctification. Jesus Himself prayed: “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil one” (Jn 17:15).

**“Passive graces” are no doubt harder to attain than active ones;** conversely, they are precisely the graces that have the “greatest influence on the world.” It is nonsense to pretend to possess sanctification unless we follow after meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, and forgiveness. People who are habitually giving way to critical tempers in daily life are constantly sharp with their tongues, disagreeable to all

around them, spiteful, vindictive, revengeful, malicious people – all such know little about sanctification. Genuine sanctification is a thing that can be seen – in a word it is “*godly character*.”

**A comparison of Justification and Sanctification** – Whereas Justification is the *work of Christ* only; in Sanctification the *work of believers* is of vast importance – God bids us to fight, and watch, and pray, and work, and strive, and take pains, and labor... as believers obey Christ, the Holy Spirit effectuates a change in the inner man; hence it is a “*cooperative effort*” (Phil 2:12-13). Whereas Justification is a finished and complete work, *sanctification is an imperfect and incomplete work* (comparatively), and will never be perfected until we reach heaven. Whereas Justification admits to no growth, sanctification is eminently a progressive work and admits to *continual growth*. Whereas Justification gives us our title to heaven, sanctification defines our position in heaven (cross reference the parable of the “talents” – if we are “faithful” with what God has given to us, we will receive “multiplied responsibilities” in heaven).

**The “great testing question” is this:** What are our tastes, and choices, and likings, and inclinations? It matters little what we wish, and what we hope, and what we desire to be before we die. Don’t just hope for a better tomorrow – Where are you now? What are you doing? Are you sanctified or not? If not, the fault is all your own. Believers who seem at a standstill in their Christian walk, are generally neglecting close communion with Jesus (a lack of cultivating “*intimacy*” with Him).

**For another thing, let us not expect too much from our own hearts here on earth** – At our best we shall find in ourselves daily cause for humiliation, and discover that we are needy debtors to mercy and grace every hour. The more light we have the more we shall see our own imperfections. Sinners we were when we began, sinners we shall find ourselves as we go on – renewed, pardoned, justified – yet sinners to the very last. Our absolute perfection is yet to come, and the expectation of it is one reason why we should long for heaven. *Though holiness is perfected in heaven, the beginning of it is confined to this world*. While some are satisfied with a miserably low degree of sanctification, and others are content with a mere round of churchgoing, let us follow after eminent holiness – this is the only way to be genuinely joyful in your faith. As a general rule, in the long run of life, it will be found true that “*sanctified people*” are the happiest people on the face of the earth – they get through life most comfortably, and they have solid comforts that the world can neither give nor take away. “Great peace have they that love Thy law;” conversely, “There is no peace for the wicked” (Prov 3:17; Ps 119:165; Is 48:22; Mt 11:30). (58-79)

**True practical holiness** – Holiness is the habit of “*being of one mind with God*”... the habit of agreeing with God’s judgment, hating what He hates, loving what He loves, and measuring everything by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man. A holy man will endeavor to shun every known sin and keep every known commandment. He will have a decided bent of mind toward God, and a hearty desire to do His will. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, “I delight in the law of God in the inner man” (Rom 7:22). A holy man will strive to be like Jesus Christ; he will labor to have the mind of Christ and be “conformed to His image” (Rom 8:29). *A holy man will bear much, forebear much, and overlook much*. A holy man will labor to mortify the desires of his body, to crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts, to curb his passions, to restrain his carnal inclinations. A holy man will endeavor to observe the golden rule, and be full of affection toward his brethren. A holy man will be merciful and compassionate and benevolent toward those around him. A holy man will follow after purity of heart, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into uncleanness of spirit. A holy man will desire, in lowliness of mind, to esteem all others better than himself; he will see more evil in his own heart than in any other in the world. He will have the same attitude as Paul, “*I am chief of sinners*.” Holy **John Bradford**, that faithful martyr of Christ, would sometimes finish his letters with these words, “A

most miserable sinner, John Bradford.” A holy man will “do everything heartily as unto the Lord” (1 Cor 10:31); holy persons will aim at doing everything well. A holy man will follow after spiritual mindedness; he will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. To commune with God in prayer, in His Word, and in the assembly of His people, these things will be the holy man’s greatest enjoyments. He will enter into something of David’s feeling – “*My soul follows hard after Thee; Thou art my portion*” (Ps 63:8; 119:57). (79-86)

**Holiness does not eliminate the presence of “indwelling sin”** – No, far from it. It is the greatest misery of a holy man that he carries about with him a “body of death,” that often when he would do good, “evil is present with him” (Rom 7:21). But it is the excellence of a holy man that he is not at peace with indwelling sin. He hates it; mourns over it; and longs to be free from it. *Sanctification is always a “progressive work,” and at its best is an “imperfect work.”* The gold will never be without some “dross” – the light will never shine without some “clouds,” until we reach heaven. The holiest men have many a blemish and defect; their life is a continual warfare with sin, and sometime you will see them not overcoming. The flesh is ever lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal 5:17; Jam 3:2). But still, in all this, the heart’s desire is to press toward it; it is what they strive and labor to be, not what they are. A man may be truly holy, and yet be drawn aside by many an infirmity. Gold is not the less gold because it is mingled with alloy. Writes **John Owen**, “*I do not understand how a man can be a true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble.*” Such are the leading characteristics of practical holiness. (87-89)

**Scripture commands us to “be holy, even as God is holy”** (Mt 5:48), and “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Th 4:3). Paul writes, “Christ died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him” (2 Cor 5:15). “He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all sin, and purify unto Him a peculiar people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). “We are created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10). “We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God’s Son” (Rom 8:29). Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn 14:15). Our lives are a “*silent sermon*” which all can read (2 Cor 3:2) – holy living carries a weight and influence with it that nothing else can give. The day of judgment will prove that many besides husbands have been won “without a word,” but by a “*holy life*” (1 Pet 3:1). Therefore, for the sake of others, if for no other reason, let us strive to be holy.

**It is so with religion as it is with other things, “there are no gains without pains.”** That which costs nothing is worth nothing. If we say with Paul, “O wretched man that I am,” let us also say with him, “I press toward the mark” (Rom 7:24; Phil 3:14). “Let us cleanse ourselves from all sin, and perfect holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). “I can do all things through Christ who infuses me with His strength” (Phil 4:13). “Apart from Me you can do nothing – therefore, abide in Me that you bear much fruit” (Jn 15:4-5). (90-108)

**“Fight the good fight of faith”** (1 Tim 6:12). “*Spiritual warfare*” is the consummate battle that all of us as believers must wage for “our soul.” It has its hand-to-hand conflicts and its wounds... it has its watchings and fatigues... it has its sieges and assaults... it has its victories and its defeats... and above all it has its consequences. The Christian man is a “*man of war*” – if we would be holy we must fight (Eph 6:10ff; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7). The true Christian is called to be a “*soldier*” – he is not meant to live a life of religious ease, indolence, and comfort. With a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world we must “*fight!*”

1. **He must fight “the flesh”** – Even after conversion he carries within him a “*nature prone to evil,*” and a heart weak and unstable as water. That heart will never be free from imperfection in this world, and

it is a miserable delusion to expect it to be. To keep that heart from going astray, the Lord Jesus bids us “*watch and pray*.” The spirit may be ready, but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:41). There is need of a daily struggle and a daily wrestling in prayer (Rom 8:36; 1 Cor 15:31).

1. **He must fight “the world”** – The “subtle” influence of that mighty enemy must be daily resisted. The love of the world’s good things, and to do as others in the world do – all these are spiritual foes. “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” – “The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.” “Whosoever is born of God overcomes the world.” “Be not conformed to this world” (Jam 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15; Gal 6:14; 1 Jn 5:4; Rom 12:2).
2. **He must fight “the devil”** – That old enemy of mankind strives to compass one great end – the ruin of man’s soul. Never slumbering and never sleeping, he is “like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” “Satan has desired to have you and sift you as wheat.” This mighty adversary must be daily resisted. “The strong man armed will never be kept out of our hearts without a daily battle” (Job 1:7; 1 Pet 5:8; Jn 8:44; Lk 22:31; Mt 17:21; Eph 6:11).

**Christian warfare is no light matter** – “Fight the good fight of faith.” “Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and the rulers of darkness.” Jesus said, “I came not to bring peace, but a sword.” (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 2:3; Eph 6:11-13; Lk 13:24; Jn 6:27; Mt 10:34; Lk 22:36; 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Tim 1:18-19). True Christianity is a struggle, a fight, a warfare. *Where there is grace there will be conflict – there is no holiness without warfare.* Furthermore, we must fight till we die. We may only have comfort in our souls provided we are engaged in the “inward fight and conflict” – it is the inevitable companion of genuine Christian holiness. Do we find in our heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do we feel anything of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh? Are we conscious of two principles within us, contending for the mastery? Do we feel anything of war in our inward man? Well, let us thank God for it! It is a good sign! It is evidence of the great work of sanctification! The child of God has two great marks he should be known for – his “*inward warfare*” and his “*inward peace*.”

**True Christianity is a “fight of faith”** – Christian warfare is not waged with carnal weapons, but with spiritual ones. *Faith* is the hinge on which victory turns; success depends entirely on *believing*. The Christian *is* what he is, *does* what he does, *thinks* as he thinks, *acts* as he acts, *hopes* as he hopes, and *behaves* as he behaves, for one simple reason – he *believes* the propositions revealed in the Word. “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). *Faith is the very backbone of spiritual existence.* There is no such thing as right living without faith and believing. Faith admits of degrees – all men do not believe alike – according to the degree of his faith, the Christian wins victories or loses battles. He who has the most faith will always be the happiest and most comfortable soldier. Nothing makes the anxieties of warfare sit so lightly on a man as the “assurance of Christ’s love” and continual protection. The indwelling confidence that Christ is on his side and success is sure. It is the “shield of faith” that quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one. The more faith, the more victory... the more faith, the more inward peace. (Eph 6:16; 2 Tim 1:12; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Gal 2:20; 6:14; Phil 4:11, 13). (109-136)

**Which of you, when building a house, doesn’t first “count the cost”?** (Lk 14:28). Conversely, what does it cost to be a true Christian? Though nearly every Christian desires for more holiness and a higher degree of spiritual life, yet nothing is more common than seeing believers “*fall away*” after a period of time. Little by little their zeal melts away, and their love becomes cold – why? They had never counted

the cost. When they find, after a time, that there is a cross to be carried, that our hearts are deceitful, and that there is a busy devil always near us, they cool down in disgust – why? Because they had really never considered “*what it cost*” to be a really consistent believer and a holy Christian. First consider what our salvation cost – it was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ – we were “*bought with a price*” – the blood of Jesus (1 Cor 6:20; 1 Tim 2:6). What does it cost the believer to be a real Christian? According to the Bible, there are enemies to overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt (a past love or passion) to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed thru, a cross to be carried, and a race to be run. *Conversion is NOT putting a man in an armchair and taking him comfortably to heaven* – it is the beginning of a *mighty conflict*, in which it “*costs much*” to win the victory. Consider the following –

1. It will cost him his “self-righteousness.” He must cast away all pride and high thoughts of his own goodness – because he has *none!* (Is 64:6; Rom 3:10) – he must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved “*only by grace*,” and owing all to the merit and righteousness of Christ. He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible knowledge, church going, and trust in nothing but Christ.
2. It will cost him his “sins.” He must be willing to give up every habit and practice that is wrong in God’s sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it. He must count all sins as deadly enemies, and hate every false way; all sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day, and sometimes almost get mastery over him, but he must never give way to them. He must keep up a *perpetual war* with his sins until he dies. To part with sin is as hard as cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye – but it must be done. He and sin must *quarrel and battle*, if he and God are to be friends.
3. It will cost him his “love of ease.” He must take pains and trouble to watch and stand on guard regarding his behavior every hour; he must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his motives, and his conduct. There is nothing we naturally dislike so much as “trouble” about our religion. We hate trouble... but the soul can have “*no gains without pains*.”
4. It will cost him the “favor of the world.” He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, persecuted, and even hated, to be thought by many a fool and a fanatic. Remember, the servant is not greater than his Master (Jn 15:20). We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges. The cup that our Master drank must be drunk by His disciples as well. When a ship is in danger of sinking, the crew thinks nothing of casting overboard precious cargo – surely a Christian should be willing to give up “*anything*” that stands between him and heaven. When you feel like your ship is in danger of sinking, you will feel faint of heart and sorely tempted to give up in despair, I bid you, “Persevere and press on!” *A religion that cost nothing... is worth nothing!* (137-161)

**“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Pet 3:18). Growth in grace is an essential part of true holiness – it is intimately and inseparably connected with the whole question of sanctification, spiritual health, and spiritual happiness. Growing in grace means a believer’s sense of sin becomes deeper, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, his love greater, and his spiritual-mindedness more dominant (2 Th 1:3; 1 Th 3:12; 4:1, 10; Col 1:10; 2 Cor 10:15; Eph 4:15; Phil 1:9; 1 Pet 2:2). He feels more of the power of godliness in his own heart, and he manifests more of it in his life. There are several “marks” by which growth in grace may be known —

1. Increased humility – The man whose soul is growing feels his own sinfulness and unworthiness more every year. He is ready to say with Job, “I am vile;” and with David, “I am a worm;” and with Isaiah, “I am a man of unclean lips;” with Peter, “I am a sinful man, O Lord;” and with Paul, “I am less than the least of all saints – I am chief of sinners” (Job 40:4; Gen 18:27; 32:10; Ps 22:6; Is 6:5; Lk 5:8; Phil 3:12; 1 Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8; 1 Tim 1:15). The nearer he draws to God, and the more he sees of God’s holiness and perfection, the more thoroughly is he sensible of his own countless imperfections. The riper he is for glory, the more he sees of the shortcomings and infirmities of his own heart – by the way, they are “many!”
2. Increased faith and love toward Christ – The man whose soul is growing finds more in Christ to rest upon, and rejoices more that he has such a Savior. As he grows in grace, he discovers a suitableness in Christ to the wants of his soul.
3. Increased holiness of life and conversation – The man whose soul is growing gets more dominion over sin, the world, and the devil every year. He becomes more careful about his temper, his words, and his actions. He strives more to be conformed to the image of Christ in all things. He forgets about the things that are behind and reaches forth unto those things that are before, making “Higher! Upward! Forward! Onward!” his continual motto (Phil 3:13). He thirsts and longs to have a will more entirely in unison with God’s will.
4. Increased spirituality of taste and mind – The man whose soul is growing takes more interest in spiritual things; the things he loves best are spiritual things; and the ways and recreations of the world have a continually decreasing place in his heart. Spiritual companions, spiritual occupations, spiritual conversation, appear of ever-increasing value to him.
5. Increase of charity – The man whose soul is growing is more full of love every year – especially his love for the brethren, a growing disposition to do kindnesses, to be generous, sympathizing, tenderhearted, and considerate. A growing soul will try to put the best construction on other people’s conduct.
6. Increased zeal and diligence in trying to do good to souls – The man who is growing will take greater interest in the salvation of sinners, mission work at home and abroad, efforts to increase religious light and diminish religious darkness, and he will not become “weary in well-doing.” He will just go on working, whatever the results may be – giving, praying, preaching, teaching, speaking, visiting. (163-175)

**Growing in grace reflects “greater intimacy” with Christ** – It is possible to have “*union*” with Christ, yet have very little “*communion*” with Him. Those who are growing in grace and getting closer to Christ, are laying hold on Him with confidence, as a loving, personal Friend. No man will ever grow in grace who does not know something experientially of the joyful habit of “communion” – we must have personal intimacy with Christ. Many who are growing in grace are unaware of it – like Moses, when he came down from the mountain – their faces shine, yet they are not aware of it (Ex 34:29). Also, if we know anything of growth in grace, and desire to know more, let us not be surprised if we have to go through much trial and affliction in this world. I firmly believe it is the experience of nearly all the most eminent saints. Like their blessed Master, they have been “men of sorrows, acquainted with grief” and “*perfected through sufferings*” (Is 53:3; Heb 2:10). Every branch in Me that bears fruit, my Father *prunes* it that it may bring forth more fruit” (Jn 15:2) – afterwards it “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11). When *days of darkness* come upon us, let us not count it a strange thing; rather, let us remember that lessons are

learned on such days that would never have been learned in sunshine. All circumstances are “*sent to us in love*” – we are in God’s best school; affliction and trials are both used by God to correct, train and instruct; ultimately, this is all meant to make us grow. (176-190)

**He who would be conformed to “Christ’s image” must be constantly “studying Christ Himself”** – just as sheep must be intimately acquainted with the *Shepherd*, so the sinner must be intimately acquainted with the *Savior*. Let’s look at the story of Jesus crossing Galilee in a boat with His disciples – a storm arises, the disciples are frightened, and Jesus is asleep – “Master! Wake up! Care not that we are about to perish?” He arises and rebukes the wind and the waves, and at once there is calm. Notice the following:

1. Being followers of Christ doesn’t exempt us from troubles – perhaps the disciples supposed He would always grant them smooth journeys. No. We are all subject to vexations and disappointments. How would the great work of sanctification go on in a man if he had no trial? Trial is often the only fire that will burn away the dross that clings to our hearts. Make up your mind to meet your share of crosses and sorrows – rest assured, they will pay a visitation to you – leave to the Lord Jesus the process He chooses, and be assured that He never makes any mistakes.
2. Jesus Christ is truly and really Man – Though He was equal to the Father, the eternal God, He was also “fully man.” He was made like unto us in all things – sin only excepted. He was often hungry and thirsty, faint and weary, sorrowing and hurting. Jesus is perfect Man no less than perfect God. He is not only a powerful Savior, but a sympathizing Savior. *Never forget, your soul’s business is in the hand of a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities.* He knows well that world in which you are struggling. Furthermore, He knows well the scheming, cunning enemy (Satan) with which we have to deal. He is no stranger to our sensations. Are you *poor and needy* – so was Jesus... are you *alone in the world* – so was Jesus... are you *misunderstood and slandered* – so was Jesus... are you *tempted by Satan* – so was Jesus... do you ever *feel great agony and conflict of mind* – so did Jesus – “My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
3. There is much weakness and infirmity even in true Christians – When the disciples were in a state of panic on the storm-tossed sea, they said to Jesus, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” Three things characterized their response: 1) There was *impatience*; 2) There was *unbelief*; 3) There was *distrust*. They had witnessed repeated examples of His love and kindness toward them, but all was forgotten in the present danger – fear is often unable to reason from past experience. Most believers get along very well so long as they have “*no trials*” – and they fancy they are trusting Him entirely. But when a trial suddenly assails them, their faith abandons them! The plain truth is that there is no absolute perfection among true Christians so long as they are still in the body. *The best and brightest of God’s saints is still compassed aplenty with infirmity.* There is not a just man on earth who comes close to not sinning. Furthermore, no one knows the length and breadth of his own infirmities until he has been “*tempted*.” Learn to abate something of the flattering estimate you may have of yourself – you do not know yourself thoroughly – “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall” (1 Pet 5:5; Prv 28:14; 1 Cor 10:12). Though as Christians we have true faith and grace, in spite of all the devil’s whispers to the contrary, we may also be frequently riddled with doubts and fears. Cross reference the lives of Peter, James, John, Abraham, David. There is quartz mixed in with many a lump of gold; there are *flaws* in the finest of diamonds; yet they do not prevent their being rated at a priceless value. Let us be more quick to see *grace* and more slow to see *imperfection*.
4. Let us learn the “power” of the Lord Jesus Christ – The waves were encompassing the ship, and Jesus simply said to the sea, “Peace, be still.” He calmed the sea with a “*word!*” This same Christ has power



over all flesh and all creation – let the believer remember as he journeys thru the wilderness of life that his Mediator, Advocate, Physician, Shepherd, Redeemer, is the Lord of lords and King of kings – that with Him nothing is impossible (Rev 17:14; Phil 4:13). All things were made by Him... by Him all things consist... He is sovereign over everything... “though the earth should melt, and the mountains should fall into the sea, God is in the midst of her, and will not be moved – therefore, be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46). Are you crushed by your circumstances? Perplexed by your seeming unbelief? There is comfort in Christ – He can speak peace to wounded hearts as easily as calm troubled seas.

5. Let us learn how tenderly and patiently and kindly Jesus deals with weak believers – We see this truth in Jesus’ words to His disciples, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” Even after the resurrection, you see the same unbelief and hardness of heart, though they saw their Lord with their own eyes! Even then some doubted! So weak were they in faith... so slow of heart were they to “believe all that the prophets had spoken” (Lk 24:25). Yet, what do we see in our Lord’s behavior towards His disciples? *You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, and love.* He does not chastise them for their stupidity! reject them for their unbelief! or dismiss them for their cowardice! No! He leads them step by step... He restores them... He sojourns with them... He blesses them! and says, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world!” (Mt 28:20). *Let all the world know that Jesus Christ is full of pity and tender mercy. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoldering wick.* He cares for the sheep of His flock; He cares for the sick and the feeble; He cares for the weakest as well as the strongest. Christ’s pledge to them was this: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5). Let the world know that the Lord Jesus will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings and infirmities. The mother does not forsake her infant because it is weak, feeble, and ignorant – right? *Know this, it is “God’s glory” to pass over the faults of His people, to heal their backslidings, and to pardon their many faults.* If you stumble, He will raise you up... if you err, He will gently bring you back... if you faint, He will revive you. Become better acquainted with Jesus; learn to know Him better, that you may become more happy and more holy. He will be the happiest and the holiest who says, “To me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). (191-223)

**“Do you love Christ?”** – The true Christian is one whose religion is in “*his heart and life*” – he feels his sinfulness and guilt, and repents. He puts off the old man with his corrupt and carnal habits, and puts on the new man. He lives a holy life, fighting habitually against the world, the flesh and the devil. Besides all this, there is one thing in a true Christian that is eminently peculiar to him – “He loves Christ.” He not only knows and trusts and obeys Christ, *He loves Him.* If a man does not love Christ, he is not a believer. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, “If God were your Father, you would love Me” (Jn 8:42). When Jesus rose from the dead he asked Peter this question, “*Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?*” He desired to call forth from him a “new confession of faith” before publicly restoring to him his commission to feed the Church. He might have said, “Do you believe in Me?” or “Are you converted?” or “Will you obey Me?” He uses none of those expressions. He simply said, “*Do you love Me?*” – that is the essence upon which a man’s Christianity hinges. A true Christian loves Christ for all “*He has done*” for him – He went to the cross for him... He redeemed him... He called him... He has forgiven him... He has freed him... He has given him light – the true Christian also loves Christ for all that “*He is still doing.*” He is daily washing away his many shortcomings... He is daily supplying all the needs of his soul... He is daily leading him by His Spirit... He is daily raising him up when he stumbles... He is daily protecting him against his many enemies... and He is preparing an eternal home for him in heaven. Where there is justifying faith in Christ, there will always be heart-love for Christ. *If a man has no love for Christ, he has no faith in Christ.* Love

for Christ will be the distinguishing mark of all saved souls in heaven. The peculiar marks by which love for Christ makes itself known are these –

1. If we love a person, we like to “think about Him” – Christ comes up in the mind of the believer many times a day (Eph 3:17). Affection is the real secret to faithful religion – the worldly man can’t think about Christ much, because he has no affection for Him. The believer thinks about Christ every day, for the simple reason, that he loves Him.
2. If we love a person, we like to “hear about Him” – We find pleasure in listening to those who speak of Him. The true Christian likes to hear something about his Master (the One he loves).
3. If we love a person, we like to “read about Him” – What intense pleasure a letter from an absent husband gives to a wife; whereas others would see little worth in the letter. Those who “love” the writer read it over and over again. The true Christian delights to read the Scriptures, because they testify of Him whom his soul loves.
4. If we love a person, we like to “please Him” – We are glad to consult His tastes and opinions, to act upon His advice. The true Christian studies to please Him, by being holy both in body and spirit... and in thoughts, and words and actions.
5. If we love a person, we like “His friends” – We are favorably inclined to them, even before we know them. When we meet them we do not feel that we are altogether strangers. True Christians regard Christ’s friends as members of His family.
6. If we love a person, we are “jealous about His name and honor” – We do not like to hear Him spoken against without speaking up for Him and defending Him. We regard the person who treats Him ill with almost as much disfavor as if he had ill-treated us.
7. If we love a person, we like to “talk to Him” – We tell Him all our thoughts, and pour out all our heart to Him. We find it easy to talk to a much-loved friend. He tells Him everything – his wants, and desires, his feelings and his fears. He asks counsel of Him in difficulty; He asks comfort of Him in trouble. He cannot help but converse with his Savior continually – because He loves Him.
8. If we love a person, we like to “always be with Him” – When we really love someone, we long to be always in their company. The true Christian longs to have done with sinning and repenting and believing, and to begin that endless life when he shall see Him as He is, and sin no more.

**So, do you “love Christ”?** – The essence of Christianity is knowing, trusting, and loving Christ who died for us. The Bible plainly teaches us that there can be no true religion without some feeling towards Christ. If you love Christ in deed and truth, rejoice in the thought that you have good evidence about the state of your soul. *Love for Christ, I tell you this day, is an evidence of grace.* Though you are sometimes perplexed with doubts and fears; though you find it hard to say whether your faith is real; though your eyes are often so dimmed with tears that you cannot clearly see your calling, where there is true love, there is faith and grace! (225-246)

**“Christ is all” – these three words are the essence and substance of Christianity.** If our hearts can fully identify with these three words, it is well with our souls. Christ is the mainspring both of doctrinal and practical Christianity. He who follows after holiness, will make no progress unless he gives to Christ His rightful place. “In the beginning Christ was with God – and in fact was Himself God” (Jn 1:1; Phil 2:6).

True Christians were “chosen in Christ” before the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20; Eph 1:4); Christ had “glory with the Father before the world began” (Jn 17:5; Prv 8:23). Scripture says that “all things were made by Christ” (Jn 1:3), that “heaven and earth are the works of His hands” (Heb 1:10). There came a day when the world seemed sunk and buried in ignorance of God and sin, and “Christ left the glory of heaven and came down into the world to provide salvation for us – He died for our sins to reconcile us to God, and today is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. There will come a time when all sin shall be expunged from existence, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and we shall reign with Him in righteousness forever. Christ is the beginning and end... He is the Alpha and the Omega... He is everything... so how can we but give Christ all the glory that is due His Name? For Christ indeed is “all!”

**Christ is all with regard to our Justification...** He is all with regard to our Sanctification... He is all with regard to our comfort at the present time... He is all with regard to our future Glorification... and He is all with regard to Heaven – the “*praise*” of the Lord Jesus will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. They will shout with a resounding voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!” (Rev 5:12-13). And the “*service*” of the Lord Jesus will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We shall “serve Him day and night in His temple” (Rev 7:13). The “*presence*” of Christ Himself shall be one everlasting enjoyment of the inhabitants of heaven. We shall “see His face” and hear His voice and speak with Him as friend with friend (Rev 22:4). His presence will fully satisfy all our wants (Ps 17:15).

**Therefore, Christ ought to be all in the “visible Church”** – Splendid buildings are nothing in the sight of God if the Lord Himself is not honored, magnified, and exalted. The Church is but a dead carcass if Christ is not “all.” *Christ ought to be “all” in our Ministry* – the great work of the Church is to lift up Christ. We are only useful so long as we exalt the great object of our faith – but useful no further. *We are to be “His ambassadors” to a rebellious world.* The Spirit will never honor that ministry who does not testify of Christ – for He is that “*bread*” that feeds the hungry man... He is the “*lifeboat*” that saves the shipwrecked soul... He is the “*medicine*” that cures the sin-sick soul. Since Christ is the object of our faith, keep your mind dwelling on Him. He that would prove a skillful archer must not look at the arrow, but at the mark. Christ loves His people to lean on Him... rest in Him... call on Him... and abide in Him. In so doing we shall prove that we fully realize that “*Christ is all!*” (247-276)