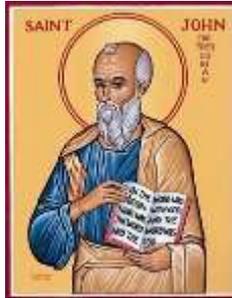


THE ATTRIBUTES OF HOLINESS

By Dr. John Wesley Slider

Based on the writings of Rev. Benjamin Titus Roberts



“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.” — 1 John 3:9 (NIV)



When I coached Cross Country I gave my runners some rules for racing:

1. Double knot your shoe laces.
2. Do not cut the course.
3. Do not look back.
4. Accelerate when you pass another runner.
5. Run through the finish.



Those are simple rules – obvious, you may think. But often times it is the obvious that escapes our attention; and when we ignore the obvious, we often lose the race.



My simple rules for racing were also rules for living:

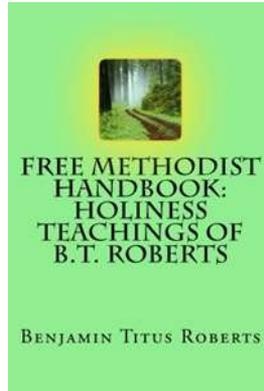
1. Double knot your shoe laces = Pay attention to the details at the start.
2. Do not cut the course = Live life by the “rules.”
3. Do not look back = Learn from your mistakes, but do not dwell on them.
4. Accelerate when you pass another runner = Do not second guess yourself, but commit to a decision.
5. Run through the finish = Finish a part of your life or all of your life strong and making a statement about who you are.

These rules really were not really rules at all, but attributes of a good race or a good life – a life well-lived. An attribute is a quality, a characteristic, a sign of something – a good race or a well-lived life.



We have reached the fourth sermon in this series on Holiness. I have used freely the teachings of Benjamin Titus Roberts, the father of the Free Methodist Church, as my outline and my inspiration.

Now, I say “father” of the Free Methodist Church without any agenda. I think it is the State of Tennessee that has removed the terms “father” and “mother” from birth certificates. They now use “parent 1” and “parent 2.” I have two questions: How does one determine which parent is #1 or #2? And why only two?



Anyway, Benjamin Titus Roberts, published his teachings on Holiness in “The Earnest Christian” from 1860 to 1893. They were later collected into a book of thirty-eight chapters. Holiness has been an emphasis of Methodism and in particular Free Methodism.

For the first three sermons in this series I have taken the first four chapters of the “Holiness Teachings of B.T. Roberts.” Today, I shall take eleven chapters and bring them into one sermon.

What are the attributes – the qualities, characteristics, and signs of Holiness – of a holy life?



DELIVERANCE FROM PRIDE

The spirit is the seat of sin, and it is the seat of Holiness. The things I do derive their moral character from what is in my spirit – some would say “in my heart.” To give a sum of money may be charity, or it may be bribery. A kind act toward another may be motivated by love of Christ, or by love of praise from others – that is pride.

There are sins that are popular, and those that are disgraceful. Self-centered considerations lead many to tolerate sometimes one sin, and sometimes another. With God, the standard of right does not vary. True Holiness will save us from both.

An attribute of Holiness is deliverance from pride. A holy person cannot feel proud. A holy Church cannot indulge in pride. Pride cannot dwell in a holy soul.

“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” — 1 Peter 5:5 (NIV)



The German theologian and reformer, Martin Luther, wrote that all sin started with pride – that is, thinking oneself above all others, even God. To say it in a pithy way, both of the words “sin” and “pride” have “I” in the middle.



Holiness implies deliverance from pride. We may think of deliverance from pride as the foundation of Holiness. Pride places “self” at the center of life. Deliverance from pride removes self and places God at the center instead.

UNSELFISHNESS



Once you and I are delivered from pride, unselfishness is simple! When we remove ourselves from the center, then we are no longer self-centered or selfish.

Holiness implies deliverance from selfishness. A selfish person cannot, at the same time, be a holy person. Selfishness is that disposition which prompts us to seek our own interests or our own gratification without regard for others. The second great commandment is, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 19:19 (NIV)

This passage supposes that we are, within proper limits, to love ourselves. The Scriptures not only allow, but command us, to have a due regard for our own happiness. Every promise of the Bible is based upon the principle that it is right for us, within proper limitations, to pursue our own welfare.

But this principle must be carefully regulated and kept within the bounds that God has given or it becomes sinful and pernicious. Self-love takes into account the whole of our existence for time and for eternity. Selfishness looks at interest and gratification for now.

Self-love has due respect for the happiness of others; selfishness inclines us to seek our own gratification without regard for God or others.

Self-love is a principle that God gives to us for own preservation; selfishness is the sinful substitute for which we so often settle.

Holiness and selfishness cannot exist together.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” — Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV).

CONTROL OF APPETITES



True Holiness touches every part of our lives. It touches not only spirit, but body and mind as well. Holiness gives control over all our appetites.

All of us have appetites. Jesus, who was Holiness itself in bodily form, had appetites. He was hungry and thirsty.

The natural appetites were given us for a good purpose. Appetites themselves are not sinful. But they are to be kept within bounds. Appetites are not to be our masters. They must be controlled, not be controlling of us. No holy person can be under the control of appetite. An uncontrolled appetite is a form of spiritual bondage.

Paul writes, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." — Philippians 4:12 (NIV).

True Holiness will give us control over our appetites.

LOVE FOR GOD



There can be no such thing as Christian Holiness without love for God.

“Jesus said: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” — Matthew 22:37 (NIV)

Christ assures us that acts of devotion are unutterably loathsome unless they spring from love. Love for God includes obedience of God.

“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.” — 1 John 5:3 (NIV)

TRUST IN GOD



True Holiness brings us into the most intimate relationship with God. We are children of God. A holy person, then, trusts in God as a child trusts a parent.

All of our interests, for eternity, are committed to the keeping of God, who never tires. We confidently trust in God Himself. We may not always see how things will turn out, but we don't need to see.

We trust God for all the grace that we need in every situation. We know that God can carry us through all things.

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.” — Psalm 125:1 (NIV)

HATRED OF SIN



Holiness is not indifference. Holiness is not only abstaining from sin; it is not that easy, good-natured disposition that smiles at sin, and tolerates it, especially if it is fashionable, or popular. True Holiness is not blind or deaf. It has eyes to see, and ears to hear. It observes. It is not ignorant or naïve.

Scriptural Holiness implies hatred of sin. Holiness offers a stern resistance to sin. It stands against the popular sin.

“Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for He guards the lives of His faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.” — Psalm 97:10 (NIV)

LOVE FOR OTHERS



Holiness implies deliverance from hatred of any human being.

It is natural to return hatred for hatred. But Holiness causes one to return good for evil, blessing for cursing, love for hatred. The teachings of scripture on this point are plain and unequivocal.

“Now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” — Colossians 3:8 (NIV)

There can be no true Holiness without the love of God. Neither can there be Holiness without love for others. The two are joined together. The

second great commandment is, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 22:39 (NIV)

Lucian, a Roman writer and opponent of Christianity, says of the early Christians: “It is incredible what expedition they use when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they spare nothing on such an occasion...”

This is the testimony of an enemy.

Holiness implies love for our enemies. It is impossible to have true Holiness without having enemies. Jesus had them. He told His disciples they should have them; but He also told His disciples they should love them and pray for them.

HONESTY



Honesty makes us thoughtful of the rights of others. Its influence is felt in all the relations of life. It makes us more anxious to give to others their rights, than we are to insist upon our own.

Holiness implies honesty in all relationships.

In the family relations, in the everyday occurrences of life, there is need for the constant exercise of honesty. We must Holiness in business, in the church, in the neighborhood, in the family, in friendships, and in random encounters.

IMPARTIALITY



God is no respecter of persons. The same spirit of Holiness is required of all.

“Those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” — Luke 14:33 (NIV)

John Wesley commenced his work among the poor. The early Methodists were primarily from the poorer classes. Yet many wealthy persons were supporters of the Methodist Revival.

JOY



Joy is an essential element of true Holiness.

The sad occurrences of life will bring occasional grief to the holy life, but deep in the heart joy reigns undisturbed. It is a God-given, solid joy.



On the TV game show, “Family Feud” in the first rounds the families give their answers, either family wins, then the audience calls out the rest of the answers.

So let’s review the attributes of Holiness in the “Family Feud” style:

- DELIVERANCE FROM PRIDE
- UNSELFISHNESS
- CONTROL OF APPETITES
- LOVE FOR GOD
- TRUST IN GOD
- HATRED OF SIN
- LOVE FOR OTHERS
- HONESTY
- IMPARTIALITY
- JOY