

May: The Way to Holy Love

By Kevin M. Watson

In his scholarship, Kenneth J. Collins has summarized John Wesley's theology as "holy love." This is seen with particular clarity in his book *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Abingdon, 2007).

A cursory reading of John Wesley's own writing shows his deep concern with holiness and love. And Collins is right to see them brought together in Wesley's theology. Consider this passage from one of John Wesley's best-known sermons, "The Scripture Way of Salvation":

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel "the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

As we receive the gift of forgiveness and pardon, we are changed. Justification launches us forward into the process of sanctification, real growth in holiness. We are born again, changed, renewed.

When we are born again, God's love is "shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost." This produces "love to all mankind." This is holy love, which comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in us when we become children of God.

Note also how holy love expels, or brings freedom from, unholy love. God's holy love frees us from "love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money." It also frees us from "pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper."

The way of holy love is a journey with Jesus where we open ourselves up to the Spirit's deep work in our hearts and lives. We surrender our lives to the Triune God, moment by moment, and we receive nothing less than "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

This journey starts with recognizing our deep need and turning from ourselves back to the Lord.

A Suggested Pattern of Prayer

As you pray through the following prayer points, invite the presence of the Lord into your time of prayer. Each day's prompt has a Scripture reference for you to pray through. As you pray allow time to also listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. When you have prayed through the Scripture and prayer point, you may be led to add your own prayers. Pray and consider what action steps might you take in response to the Lord's leading. Repeat this prayer pattern weekly for the month.

Daily Prayer Points

Sunday: Give thanks to the Father for the gift of forgiveness and pardon through Christ. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Monday: Ask the Lord to reveal to you any places where you have departed from the way of holy love and ask for the Holy Spirit to enable you to return to the way of holy love. (1 John 1:9)

Tuesday: Pray for the leaders of our movement to be captured by holy love and freed from “love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money.” (1 John 2:15-17)

Wednesday: Pray for God to open doors for you to share God’s holy love with others. (Mark 16:15)

Thursday: Thank the Lord for all of the faithful witnesses to holy love that God has raised up who provide examples for us to learn from and follow. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Friday: Reflect on God’s perfect love for you and ask the Father to help you receive his holy love more deeply. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

Saturday: Ask God to revive the people called Methodists. (Psalm 85:4-7)

“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:34-40)

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