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## FORWARD THROUGH PURITY

*“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8).

This dynamic exclamation at once thrills you with the challenge of distant horizons. It not only calls to the dizzy snow-capped mountain peaks of Christian achievement in this life, but it transcends all worlds and commands a vantage view of the glimmering heights of that far-off heavenly land.

Repeat the word *purity* and visions of innocence, beauty, whiteness, and holiness flash before you in panoramic concourse. In it you behold the innocence of the new born child, the beauty of the garden of God, the whiteness of the valley lily, and the holiness of the heart of Jesus Christ.

For a Scripture text, I lift from that Alpine collection of childhood memory verses a choice gem of rarest hue: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

No other assembled composition in the Holy Cannon glows with more luster than the collection known as the Beatitudes. From Christ's holy lips atop the Horns of Hattin, these words fall like the dewdrops on Mt. Hermon. Gems of immortal moment they are, chiefest of which is my text.

"FORWARD THROUGH PURITY." This topic literally bursts forth from this text as naturally as a stalk of wheat growing up out of a fertile field.

In attempting to apply this principle to contemporary religious thought, we are immediately confronted with the problem of harmony. It appears that we have a contradiction in terms, or perhaps a conflict in principles.

It is true that the word *forward* is the order of the day. All signals are set to the word "Go." But some people seem to think that if we encumber the progress of our times and our church with the old antiquated, obsolete word called purity, we automatically invite the ridicule, the scorn, and contempt of "liberal minded" and "enlightened" people of our day.

No theme is more unpopular, but no truth more imperative for our times than Christian purity.

This theme could well have been the battle cry of every holy band of sainted souls throughout human history, and it still echoes to us today across thousands of years of carnage, want, waste, and woe. It calls to us in the final hours of the last great struggle to preserve the heritage of holiness through the crucible of earth's Armageddon until the King shall return in power and great glory.

To guide our thinking in the exploration of this trenchant text, I present:

- A compelling conquest,
- A call to militant aggression,
- An accepted state of holiness,
- A validation of our claims,
- An urge to complete our mission.

The story of Christianity, its impact upon the world, and the reverberating accents of its tri-

umphant tread through the centuries revolves around the principles of conquest.

*"Give us a watchword for the hour  
A thrilling word, a word of power  
A battle cry, a flaming breath  
That calls to conquest or to death."*

Napoleon once said, "Conquest made me what I am and conquest will sustain me."

The spirit of conquest is the spirit of progress. The spirit of conquest is the spirit to survival.

While this world enters its final stages of degenerating moral metamorphosis and staggers its last long mile to complete disintegration, death and doom, the church is tottering on the crutches of decrepitude having been shorn of her power to condemn and robbed of her strength to salt the earth and light the world.

It was never intended that the church be pale of cheek, and anemic of soul, or that it should languish long on beds of affliction. The church, as depicted in the Bible, enters the conquest like a "bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Psalm 19:5), "... terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:4).

The church is not an ark into which a favored few may enter in and float over a placid sea of life to a golden shore.

The church is not an insurance agency to which men may pay their weekly premium and be insured against punishment and pain of eternal flames.

The church is not a social club where members assemble to enjoy each other's fellowship and entertain one another.

The church is not a convalescent home where

the spiritually crippled and morally weak are treated for hereditary ills.

The church was destined to be a band of fiery-souled, blood-washed, battle-scarred warriors, sent on a mission, summoned to a conquest and guided to a glorious destiny.

The Pentecostal Holiness Church stands today at the moment of her grandest potential, yet greatest peril. We are in grave danger of losing on couches what our forefathers won on crosses.

Our holiness heritage that was purchased in the cauldrons of Calvary and preserved for us through the long crucible of human suffering is being exchanged for fantasy and fanfare, and the clarion voices of those old-time holiness preachers whose theme was "Holiness or Hell" are being replaced by soft-voiced, effeminate babblers who make a play on pointless platitudes and leave their congregations in utter confusion. They have learned to talk about hell with such tact and finesse until people are coming to feel that Hell is not such a bad place after all.

Someone has said that hell would be a nice place to live if it weren't for the climate, the class of people who live there, and its form of government.

The overtones of militant aggression have characterized the ministry of the Pentecostal Holiness Church from the day of her birth and have followed throughout her turbulent history.

Jesus Christ said, "I came not to send peace but a sword." This world of evil is an avowed enemy of the church. The battle lines are clearly drawn. There can never be any peaceful co-existence. Concord is impossible. It is a conflict to the finish—a fight to the death.

If the church is shorn of her purity, she is

robbed of her power. There will be no need for us to do like Samson of old, to go out and shake ourselves when the enemy is upon us.

Christ's first mention of the church places it in its proper perspective for all time. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19).

Here is conquest. Here is militant aggression. Here is contrast. Here is the church against the world. Here is purity against filth, holiness against sin, righteousness against corruption, the church against the gates of Hell.

I understand that the favorite Scripture verse of Lyndon Johnson is: "Come now, and let us reason together." That is fine, but I would like to emphasize the remainder of the verse: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

The prophet is talking of a two-fold experience here. He is telling us of a duel malady and a double cure. He is describing a spiritual experience and a quality of character. The prophet Isaiah is heralding the double-pronged panacea that establishes for all time to come the fact of the destructive nature of sin's blight and the drastic dynamic of the holiness experience. Nothing less could have sustained our founding fathers in those desperate days as they dared to carve an image of personal purity before the attacks of a hostile world.

I take my stand along beside those pioneer holi-

ness preachers who preached a thousand texts, but always arrived at the same conclusion: "It's holiness or hell."

To corroborate this truth, I quote from Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

As far as the Bible is concerned, holiness is the only experience that is absolutely mandatory if we are to see God. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

These verses do not only mean that we will see God at the end of life. They also indicate that a pure heart opens the eyes of the sanctified believer so that he can in this life behold the greatness of God and be made a partaker of His divine nature.

The Bible doesn't say you must have the Holy Ghost to see God . . . that you have to speak in tongues to see God . . . that you have to be one of the pentecostals to see God . . . that you have to be a successful preacher to see God . . . that you have to be a bishop to see God . . . that you have to keep up with the trend of the times to see God . . . that you have to keep step with contemporary religious thought to see God, but the Bible does say you must have a pure heart to see God.

It is the smart thing in these days to ride the current trend in politics, social relations, and religious thought.

On the political scene, we are in the fastest transition period of history. This nation is fast becoming a welfare state, a socialistic government with land reforms. The days of our Republic are numbered.

Beyond all question, we are living in the most momentous period of history. It is a time of vast

and rapid change. Human thought and progress, which for millenniums advanced like some slow-moving glacier, have thawed into a thousand torrents of intense activity, plunging precipitously toward a frightening tomorrow.

"Great clocks of destiny are striking now" and with each thunderous clang some new epoch-making event occurs. Long pent-up hatreds burst forth into flaming revolt. Old empires totter and collapse. Science breaks through a new barrier into the unknown.

This is an age of global revolution in every phase of life. Everywhere there is ferment and turmoil as two and one-half billion people polarize around the self-appointed champions of East and West.

Says Cyril Garbett, Archbishop of York, "It is possible that within the last fifty years greater change has taken place than in all the long centuries between the birth of Christ and the middle of the 19th Century."

Man has unlocked secret arsenals of nature's power, and not satisfied to travel about the world with ever-increasing rapidity, is exploring outer-space.

Men today seem powerlessly propelled down a path into a bottomless abyss of destruction. There is talk of millions dying in a single bomb explosion and of whole nations being wiped out. Thirty minutes of thermonuclear war and this earth could be void of life.

There is a great deal of appeal in the demonstration of "power" among the pentecostals. There is even the theory that you can have the power regardless of your moral character. But it remains as one of the unalterable facts of time and eternity, you cannot have power without puri-

ty. Purity is that quality of character that identifies you with Jesus Christ. He claims kinship with you on no other grounds. Purity is the only thing that can bring you to terms with Almighty God. To go forward without purity is to go forward without God.

In this age of suspicion and fear, of panic and despair, men need peace of mind, courage and hope, guidance and direction. This can be found only when men find the experience of heart purity which alone brings one into a right relationship with his Maker.

To be socially accepted today, you must subscribe to the theory that all men are created free and equal, and that every man has a right to everything that everyone else possesses.

On the religious timetable, the popular trend is to accept the new morality, the most dangerous and deadly aspect of which is the relativity of truth.

I believe in the immutability of the truth, the truth of the existence of God, sin, holiness, heaven, hell. This truth is not relative.

Such truths as the principle of sin, the holiness of God, the demand for purity in man are not relative. The infallibility of the Scriptures, the truths of a burning hell, an endless eternity, the nature and curse of sin, and the perfect cure found in the provisions of Calvary—these are not relative.

I believe that the "soul that sinneth, it shall die." I believe that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." I believe that no man receives Pentecost without heart purity. I believe that there is no true power without purity, that purity is power. Power without purity is power that destroys. It is lawlessness, it is anarchy, it is rebel-

lion against restraint and its ultimate end is slavery.

The word "purity" means the state or quality of being clean, freedom from foreign or adulterating matter. It means innocence, virtue, absence of evil or improper motives.

It not only includes one's state of being, but it digs at the heart of conduct. Purity of character will reveal itself in purity of motive and conduct.

The one truth that underlies the pentecostal experience is the truth of holiness. This is our heritage.

In pentecostal circles, the trend is to get on the band wagon of pentecostal emphasis of tongues and gifts. To be anything but a gullible disciple of this new emphasis on pentecost and tongues is to be an antiquated traditionalist and lose the plaudits of the people.

I recall a man named Noah who refused to follow the trend of his day. And when the flood was over and the world was a watery waste, Noah rested on the top of Mt. Ararat in the peace of a new morn.

Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and when Pharaoh and his armies lay dead on the shores of the Red Sea, Moses was climbing to the rugged summit of Sinai to talk with God face to face.

Daniel would not defile himself with the meat that the king did eat, and when Belshazzar lay dying with an hundred darts in his heart, Daniel was reading the handwriting on the wall and telling of a day when the little stone would roll down the mountain and fill the whole earth.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego dared to be different when the crowd danced to the devil's music. When the jeering worshipers of Babel

cried: "Get with it men, don't be squares!" The three Hebrew children stood upright and looked the other way. They landed in a furnace of fire, but among those blazing faggots they found a fourth man who took the burn out of the fire and made Babylon's inferno an air-conditioned palace.

The greatest danger signal of this day is that men are so fascinated by change till progress is being measured by the criterion of change. I know that change is absolutely necessary to progress, but change in itself is not progress. Change may be destructive.

Men have become reckless, daring to scrap without hesitancy the precious legacies of the past. They are consigning to the ash heap the time-tested principles and standards established by men of bygone years.

It is accepted that Pentecostal Holiness people don't have to be different now. They don't have to dress modest any more. No place seems to be off limits to our people. The new morality is taking its toll.

If the Pentecostal Holiness Church is to salvage from the shambles of universal confusion and change any of the guideposts, landmarks, and standards set up by our founding fathers, she must assert herself and rediscover her mission and validate her claims in humanities' darkest night and times' last hour.

A few weeks ago, I heard George Byus stand up in Santa Cruse, California at the annual Conference and lift his voice like a bugle blast at daybreak. He called his people back to holiness, purity and God. He reminded me of one of those tall California Redwood trees. I never before saw a man stand so tall. His voice was like a lone sentinel who saw destruction coming and cried to the

sleeping people below. His was a lonely voice, a solitary voice, but it was a clear voice that gave the right direction.

I would like to take my stand beside him and echo his refrain and say "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Further, that we be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul outlines the perfect pattern for living this high and noble standard of purity: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure . . . think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

It goes without saying that every God-sent church in this world is under divine charge to fulfill a particular mission. For many years now I have been obsessed with the conviction that the Pentecostal Holiness Church was sent into the world for a special task, a particular function, to bear a personal message, to preserve a precious truth. If we fail in this, we have no justification to exist.

I can say without equivocation that the Pentecostal Holiness Church has been divinely called to be the custodian of the dual doctrine of holiness as a second, definite, instantaneous work of grace, and the infilling of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

To establish our hearts in these two great doctrines, God gave us Holmes Theological Seminary almost simultaneously with the birth of our church. For more than sixty years she has been driving home to the hearts of young men and

women the doctrine of holiness as a second, definite work of grace. Holmes has beamed like a beacon the Bible truth about holiness and pentecost and has kept these two doctrines in their proper focus and in their correct relationship each to the other.

Holiness involves two things: freedom from the Adamic nature and the imputation of the new nature. Nothing has arisen during the last sixty years to change the view of our church on holiness. But everything that has happened and everything I have seen in my 34 years in this church make me more positive in my stand on holiness. In my opinion, it is most imperative that we take every precaution to preserve our heritage, and keep alive the doctrine of holiness.

This double-barreled truth is our responsibility. These have been our guidelines. These are our anchors of truth. They have not changed and they will never change. They are as changeless as God the Father, who said: "Be ye holy: for I the Lord am holy."

God forbid that we should ever forget that we are more than Pentecostals. We are Pentecostal Holiness. The one distinctive that underlies the pentecostal experience is the truth of holiness. Holiness is our heritage.

Forward is our muster cry. Onward we must go. But at this crucial juncture in the history the question of greatest importance is the direction in which we are going.

A quick look at this Conference theme, "Forward Through Purity, Power, and Purpose," and we can get our bearing. Purity is our guidepost. Purity is to our church what a compass is to the mariner at sea.

The ocean-going ships that sail the high seas

can chart their course by the sun by day and the stars by night when there is no cloud in the sky. But when the black billowing storm clouds blot out the stars and clothe the sun in darkness, the pilot must consult his compass. No matter how dark the night or how black and stormy the day, the true compass always points to the north and guides the ship through raging seas, around rocky shoals, and into a peaceful harbor at journey's end.

Just so the great pointing finger of purity will steer us as a church through a world that is bogged in sordid sins, and keep us on course when all other guiding lights have gone out.

Billy Graham said recently that the world is already on fire. May I add that the faggots have already been lit and the flames stab the night.

The inevitable eruption of a universal conflagration is as ominous as the stealthy ticking of a time bomb. The fuse has been lit. It sputters and sizzles as it creeps nearer and nearer to the moment of destruction.

I am not a prophet of doom, but I must read the capitals as I see them. We are headed into a storm. Tribulation's night is upon us. Many of the old time-tested landmarks have been washed up by the lashing waves of compromise. Only the compass remains. "Keep thyself pure," was the farewell appeal of Paul the aged to his young son in the ministry, Timothy.

There is yet much land to be possessed, many seas to sail, higher mountains to scale, and hotter deserts to cross. We must go, we must move. The time to march is past, it is too late for the advance. In the last flickering rays of time's short day we have only enough time left to charge.

Let us charge, but let's charge right. Pickett's

charge up Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg is America's chief military tragedy. Pickett charged bravely, but wrongly and 7,000 sons of the South died in a few short hours.

If we try to make the trip without purity, we will have traveled in vain.

We can take heart from those great men of the past whose stand for truth and righteousness made an impact on the world around them. We can fire our faith by their works that follow them though their bodies have long since turned to dust.

Bunyan is dead, but pilgrims are still marching toward the Celestial City.

Raikes is dead, but tens of thousands of Sunday Schools still swing open their doors every Sunday morning to street urchins.

Cowper is dead, but the old blood-stained hymns he wrote are still sung around the world.

Wesley is dead, but heart purity, perfect love, holiness, and the second blessing still remain the heritage of the church.

Moody is dead, but evangelism still lives.

Billy Sunday is dead, but the forces of temperance still fight on.

J. H. King is dead, but dignity and honor and truth still grace the Bishop's chair.

Dan T. Muse is dead, but love, compassion, and humility is still found among us.

T. L. Aaron is dead, but scholarly men still speak out in the class rooms of our church colleges.

N. J. Holmes is dead, but the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of others has not completely disappeared from among us.

F. M. Britton is dead, but men still dare to lift their voices in the face of a hostile world and preach holiness or hell fire.

Thus I add my feeble voice to the distant echoes of those just men made perfect and plead for the preservation of purity until we have completed our mission as a Pentecostal Holiness Church and safely crossed to the other side.

Near the end of the fifteenth century, the old world of Europe and the Far East had closed its books on new horizons. The scholars had agreed there was nothing beyond. But a young Italian gazed into the sunset and believed there was more out there. He was called foolish and a fanatic, but against impossible odds, one day he set sail toward the sunset.

In excerpts from the diary of Christopher Colombo (I believe in nautical terms it is called a log) there was recorded the following:

1492—October 2, we sailed due west.

October 3, we sailed due west.

October 4, we sailed due west.

October 6, we sailed due west.

October 8, we sailed due west.

October 9, we sailed due west.

October 10, we sailed due west.

October 12, land ahead!

The courage of that heroic young Italian glows from the pages of history. In the poem, "The Voyage of Columbus," Joaquin Miller expresses it better than I can. Here is what it says:

*Behind him lay the gray Azores,*

*Behind the gates of Hercules;*

*Before him not the ghost of shores*

*Before him only shoreless seas.*

*The good Mate said: "Now we must pray,*

*For lo! the very stars are gone.*

*Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?"*

*"Why, say, 'Sail on! sail on! sail on!'"*



*"My men grow mutinous day by day;  
My men grow ghastly wan and weak!"*  
The stout Mate thought of home; a spray  
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.  
*"What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,  
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?"*  
*"Why, you shall say at break of day,  
'Sail on! sail on! Sail on! and on!'"*

*They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the Mate:  
'This mad sea shows its teeth tonight.  
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,  
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!  
Brave Admiral, say but one good word;  
What shall we do when hope is gone?"*  
The words leapt like a leaping sword:  
*"Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"*

*Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck  
And peered through darkness. Ah! that night  
Of all dark nights! And then a speck—  
A light! A light! A light! A light!  
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!  
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.  
He gained a world; he gave that world  
Its grandest lesson: "On! sail on!"*

Like Columbus responding to the beckoning finger of the unknown, we too, around the turn of the century, set sail on a long voyage. We too faced many who discouraged us and disagreed with us and said that this was only a passing fad. But we are still sailing on. We too are sailing into the sunset. We know that beyond the sunset there is another land—a heavenly land—a land that is fairer than day, a land where the flowers never fade and men don't die.

*"Beyond the sunset, oh blissful morning,  
Beyond the sunset, oh glorious day!"*

I strain my eyes as I try to peer through the gathering shadows and I think I see—no, I know I see—land ahead!

The old Ship of Zion is plowing the unchartered seas. There will be flickering lights along the shore to guide us into the haven of rest in a little while.

Land ahead? Oh, yes! A heavenly land. A land where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. A land where the toils of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the way.

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(Preached at the last General Conference he attended—August, 1965—just four months before he went to be with Christ.)