

## A SERMON ON "HOLINESS"

Now if any of you people want to have a jecminy-fit before this sermon begins, just crank away. I will gladly wait till you get through.

I'm waiting.

But nobody seems inclined to throw a fit, so I'll begin.

Yes, that's what I said. Holiness. I find that in some sections the subject of "Holiness" is agitating the people, and somebody might be interested in what I have to say about it.

The word "Holiness" as I am here using it refers to these people who claim that they can live and do live absolutely sinless lives here in this world. They claim to be just as perfect and sinless as Jesus was when he lived here among men.

Now I believe everybody ought to be just as good as they possibly can, and there is no danger of any of us getting too good. But I think we ought to be sorter careful how we boast of our goodness. Boasting is a sin to start with, and people who are really very good are never boastful. Instead of making themselves tiresome to everybody by going around telling how good they are, they just quietly go about doing their duty and not saying much about it. They are willing for their daily lives to bear witness as to how good they are, and they would be the last people in the world to boast about it. If a man really could live a holy and sinless life, his neighbors would soon discover the fact without him telling it.

But still there are people who seem to think it is their duty to set themselves up as equals of Jesus, claiming that they are absolutely perfect and holy and do not sin at all.

Well, they lie, and lying is a sin. That alone is enough to knock the socks off of all their pretended holiness.

And now let me go a little deeper into the thing and show you WHY a man of Adam's fallen race cannot live an absolutely holy and perfect life in this dispensation of the world.

Here's why:

Adam was created a perfect human being, and he was put on trial in a perfect Eden to see if he would STAY perfect. He was given his choice of obedience and eternal life or disobedience and death.

Please get this fact well settled in your mind and don't forget it: Adam before the fall was just as perfect and holy as Jesus Christ. And he COULD have remained so. But God made him a free moral agent in order that he might take whichever course he preferred. You see if God had made him so that he COULDN'T sin, it wouldn't have been one bit of credit to him that he remained holy. Because you see he would have had no choice in the matter and could not have done otherwise. But after being made so that he COULD sin, THEN if he had stood the test and re-

mained holy it would have been some credit to him.

But we know the perfect Adam didn't hold out very long. Here came the temptation and the holy man fell for it just like a rednosed prohibitionist grabbing at a quart bottle.

Well, what then?

He was no longer holy.

He had become a sinner and had fallen under the condemnation of death.

Now get this:

Adam had begotten no children previous to his fall. All of his children were born AFTER the fall—after he had become a sinner. No other member of the race started life with the same advantage that Adam started with.

Do you get that?

Then try another one:

If Adam, who started life as a sinless man, could not REMAIN sinless, then how do you expect any of his sinful children to climb back to perfection and live holy lives?

It cannot be done.

We are plainly told that the whole human race was condemned to death because of Adam's sin, and there wasn't a human being on earth who could redeem the race out of death. That would require the life of another perfect man, and there wasn't any.

Now, if some of Adam's children had been born BEFORE the fall, and supposing that they didn't take a bite of the forbidden apple along with Dad and Mam—why, then they would have been on the perfect plane and might have stood a chance to stay there. In that case they could have started another race that was not under the sentence of death.

But since they were all BORN under the death sentence there was no one to get them out.

That was just exactly the reason that the Son of God had to leave the glories of heaven and take upon himself the form of a man—in order that he might STAND THE TEST which Adam failed to stand, and afterward to sacrifice his holy humanity to buy back the life of Adam's race.

Perhaps you never thought about it in that way, but it is a fact that Jesus COULD have sinned. He had all the temptations that Adam had, and possibly more. Satan seems to have just tried himself in tempting Jesus. But Jesus was man enough to stand out against every temptation and live a holy life. If he had made one little compromise with Satan—if he had just stuck one tooth in the apple of sin—it would have been Good-morning John with him. His power to save the world would have been gone in a flash and he, too, would have been numbered among the sinners.

But we are thankful today that Jesus was not the failing kind. He stood every test and came off more than conquerer. Thus he proved his worthiness to serve as a substitute for Adam, and his ability to pay the debt that Adam owed.

If it had been possible for any member of Adam's race to climb back to perfection, then he could have done all that Jesus did, and it would not have been necessary for Jesus to come at all.

The human race had 4,000 years in which to produce a holy man before Jesus came. But it didn't produce him. And God knew that fallen humanity never would produce a holy man, else He would not have made the supreme sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son.

It is true that when Jesus came and redeemed the race he started an absolutely new thing that never had been heard of before. He opened up an offer of a spiritual or heavenly kingdom in addition to the earthly kingdom that the prophets talked about. He began to select a "Bride Class" to be composed of a little flock of faithful followers. That class, even in the present human condition, will live such devoted lives they will not WANT to sin, and such sins as they DO commit through the weakness of the flesh will not be set down against them as sins. They will have IMPUTED to them the holiness of Jesus, and in HIS merits they will stand approved. God is a reasonable God, and when a man does the very best he can under the circumstances, he will not be condemned.

But please remember that when you are getting through on the merits of Jesus, you are not getting through on your own merits. That makes a big difference.

## DEBS IS FREE

Eugene Debs is free, but the peanut politicians who imprisoned him are not free. What is more, they never will be free until they get down in the dust of humiliation and ask God to lift the terrible burden of guilt from their benighted hearts. They are the fellows who are guilty of crime—the low-downest, blackest and most inexcusable crime that was ever committed by men in high authority since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And please understand that this belated release of Debs does not atone for the crime of his imprisonment. There was a time when Harding had a chance to do a great deed—a deed that would have covered him with glory and won for him the lasting esteem of all good people. That was the day he entered the White House. If he had been big enough and brave enough to order the release of Debs as his first official act as president, he would then have been entitled to a degree of credit which he cannot claim now.

After nearly a year of bluffing and stalling, after nearly a year of listening to the war jingoes and the "patriots for profit," and then reluctantly doing a duty that he could have done and SHOULD have done the very first day—seems to me like that isn't anything to brag about nor to be honored for.

And so I say the Harding administration has forfeited all credit for a deed that might have covered it with glory.

After the release of Debs from the Atlanta prison, his trip to Washington and from there to his home in Indiana was one long and glorious ovation. Every where throughout the journey the stations and the streets were packed with cheering multitudes. It was a strange demonstration to be given a man who has been in prison as a "criminal." An eye-witness to the whole thing has declared that only one other man in modern history has received such an ovation from the people. That was Woodrow Wilson when he went to Europe after the war closed to make peace on the terms of his famous "fourteen points." Wilson had made great promises of what he would do over there—how he would liberate the suffering and bleeding masses of the world and bring home a peace treaty that would be built upon justice and right. The common people all over the world believed in Wilson then, and the bleeding millions of Europe welcomed him as the saviour of civilization.

But Wilson went over there and betrayed his trust and came home discredited and dishonored.

But there is one man who has been put to every test, and who has NOT failed. Instead of betraying his friends and selling out to the enemy, Eugene Debs was willing to go to prison for what he believed was right, and for what everybody now KNOWS was right.

That was the test.

And Eugene Debs proved himself a man. He proved to the world that he would not betray his friends. That he would not sell out. Nor whine. Nor beg. He has proved in a most convincing way that he is WORTHY of the people's confidence and love.

That is why the prisoner's journey home was a triumphal march.

That is why 25,000 people were packed around the railroad station of his home town to give him a greater welcome than any president ever received. Banners waving. Bands playing. The whole city in tears of joy, at his home-coming.

A strange way to welcome an ex-convict.

I saw something in the paper today about Otto Kahn. Well, I didn't think he could, but maybe he Kahn.

## "BLUETS and BUTTERCUPS"

This little book of poems was written by the wife of James Larkin Pearson, editor of The Fool-Killer. The book contains about 20 poems, a few written in the author's girlhood days, but most of them in later life. It is neatly printed, and has a picture of the author. I will send you one postpaid for 25 cents, and I will also throw in for good measure another little book entitled "An Autobiographical Sketch of James Larkin Pearson," giving a complete history of The Fool-Killer and its editor, Mrs. Cora Wallace Pearson. Boomer, N. C.