

January 5

His Dictate my Delight!

(Continuation from January 4)

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

"He who has called you is faithful; He will also do it" (1 Thess 5:24)

Making excuses is basic to human nature. We have inherited it from our first parents. When God confronted them after their fall, they invented excuses to cover up their failure. We looked at two of the commonest excuses yesterday. We shall look at another two today—

● *Holiness is optional!*

Holiness is not optional but a basic obligation expected from us by our Creator. Micah the prophet cried to the backslidden people of Israel, "God has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord REQUIRE of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8)? Because the Church has canonized only a select few with sainthood—like St. Paul and St. Augustine—the average Christian has developed an unconscious conviction that only a special category of people is empowered or expected to live holy. But the Bible explicitly teaches that "no one" will see the Lord without holiness (Heb 12:14).

God desires that "all" of His children grow "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Holiness is a *command* from God and not a nice suggestion. Each of us is special to God — "chosen... precious... royal"—and there are no deluxe editions among His people (1 Pet 2:4,5,9). Let holiness be our watchword.

● *Holiness is all by God!*

Calvinistic theology and Armenian theology are the two main streams in the world of Christian thinking. The former stresses the sovereignty of God and the latter the responsibility of man. To me the Bible seems to hold both these views in proper tension. Without God, we *cannot*; and without us, God *will not*! Both the Testaments teach this truth. We are to "sow" for ourselves righteousness, and the Lord will "shower" righteousness on us (Hos 10:12). As "we" awake from sleep and arise from the dead, "Christ" will give us light (Eph 5:14). When we forget our responsibility we become careless. If we forget what God is doing in us we become joyless.

***More holiness give me, more strivings within;
More patience in suffering, more sorrow for sin;
More purity give me, more strength to o'ercome;
More freedom from earth-stains, more longings for Home!***

(Philip P. Bliss, 1838-1876)