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Posted on 06 April 2019 By J.C. Ryle

A remarkable number of books that promote formulas for living the Christian life have had their day on the Christian bestseller lists, only to fade away as time goes on. Yet J.C. Ryle's *Holiness*, which was first published 126 years ago, shows no signs of going out of style. What could possibly account for the longevity of a volume that *Reformation Revival Journal* once called the finest work on living the Christian life available? I offer three reasons.

1. It gives no formulas. Bishop Ryle, an evangelical Anglican minister from the mid to late 1800s, magnified the grace of God in Christ and spoke often of the joy, peace and assurance available to all who trust in the Son of God. And yet, as *Holiness* demonstrates, he had no illusions that the Christian life would be a walk in the park. Beginning immediately at Chapter One, where Ryle explains the terrible subtlety of sin and its power to trip up believers even though they are free from its domination, he takes nothing for granted. He dismantles many false ideas about Christian growth that damaged the lives of Christians of his time. Some believers including this one who read *Holiness* today will notice that many of these ideas are still around, and have messed them up at certain points of their lives.
2. It is remarkably accessible and easy to read, considering its age. Sometimes I see Ryle's books published in modern paraphrased versions, and I am at a loss to know why Ryle's style is described by many as plain and pointed, without any of the formalities that characterize

19th Century English compare and contrast his works with those of his great Baptist contemporary, Charles Spurgeon.³ It is thoroughly biblical. If aspiring preachers and teachers want a great model whom they can follow or someone who effortlessly brought the whole counsel of Scripture to bear upon the subject being discussed, Ryle is their man. WOW! This book was written in the late 1800s, but it reads like it was written today. Each chapter is a separate paper written by J.C. Ryle, some were sermons, all focused on SCRIPTURAL holiness. Ryle's discussions are beautifully simple and completely scripturally founded. He begins with chapters on sin, sanctification, holiness, then continues on to offer biblical examples of his points. His chapter on Moses clearly represents Moses as a type of Christ. Moses left the rank and greatness and riches of Pharaoh's court to come down to the enslaved and persecuted children of Israel to choose suffering and affliction to deliver them. Sound familiar? Moses' life is an illustration, a shadow of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Christ left the majesty of heaven to come down to a people enslaved and afflicted by sin to suffer for our deliverance. Christ is truly found on every page of the Bible, God's story of the redemption of His people. Ryle says, "You must learn to believe promises better than possessions, things unseen better than things seen, things in heaven out of sight better than things on earth before your eyes, the praise of the invisible God better than the praise of visible man; then, and then only, you will make a choice like Moses, and prefer God to the world." The last chapter is entitled, "Christ is all," because this is the ultimate goal of our pursuit of holiness: to be like Christ. We will never achieve this perfectly in this world, but we are to strive toward this goal. Let us all learn and strive to do so. Let us live ON Christ. Let us live IN Christ. Let us live WITH Christ. Let us live TO Christ. So doing, we shall prove that we fully realize that Christ is all. So doing, we shall feel great peace, and attain that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14. This book is definitely one of my favorite books of all times, and I would highly recommend it to everyone, not only Christians, but anyone who wants to know what is at the heart of Christianity: CHRIST. Ryle's work is a classic Reformed defense of the pursuit of sanctification as an active enterprise against various late 19th century denigrations of that

understanding He is, in a way, a Puritan out of place in history and easier to read than John Owen In Holiness, Ryle stands against extremes among the Reformed and Lutheran that claim sanctification is all about faith, but also against the holiness movements of his day, arising in part out of a misdirection of Wesley's understanding of immediate sanctification He begins noting the difference between justification and sanctification In justification the word to be addressed to man is believe only believe in sanctification the word must be watch, pray, and fight What God has divided let us not mingle and confuse At the same time each are integral to a complete understanding of the salvation won in Jesus Christ The book is a collection of addresses, not a completely systematic understanding, but his first three chapters on sin, sanctification, and holiness come close to that kind of completeness His words are challenging and demand doctrinal understanding, deep personal awareness, and an application of doctrine to life Sanctification is that inward spiritual work which the Lord Jesus Christ works in a man by the Holy Ghost, when He calls him to be a true believer He not only washes him from his sins in His own blood, but He also separates him from his natural love of sin and the world, puts a new principle in his heart, and makes him practically godly in life My criticism is two fold aside from the too constant Reformed denial of the possibility of holiness in this lifetime Like the Puritans before him, Ryle makes holiness a mental experience, often ignoring the fact that we are embodied beings and might need direction in the physical realm He also makes it too individual an experience, ignoring the communal call to holiness and the role of the church in achieving Christian maturity As a spur to holiness this is a wonderful book, but it requires a style of life lived out in the physical world and amid Christ's body here on earth. Thank the Lord for the wonderful man J C Ryle is. It just got better and better every chapter, with the pinnacle being the last three chapters This book is a BANGER ALL CAPS Ryle Calls Us To Live A Life Set Apart From The World And Set Our Minds On Things Above Bishop JC Ryle Served The Lord In Ministry In The Church Of England For Almost The Entire Length Of The Victorian Age Although Ryle Was Committed To All Forms Of Evangelism, His Heart Beat Strongest For Mass Evangelism In The Cities Much Of His Immediate Influence On Victorian

Evangelism Stemmed From His Prolific Number Of Tracts
Several Million Copies Of His Than Different Tracts Were
Distributed In A Variety Of Languages Throughout The
Land Bishop Ryle S Desire, And His Answer To The Issues Of
His Day, Was The Pursuit Of Personal Revival Of Scriptural
Holiness This Holds Just As True For Today, As It Was In His
Time This book will change your outlook on what it means to
live a life worthy of the Gospel Despite writing in 1877, Ryle
speaks so clearly to the reader, and so insightfully into a
society that has surprisingly changed very little. Review
available on An excellent book on a much neglected topic in
our day The first few chapters are particularly helpful At times
his too repetitive and could hurt tender consciences if he is
read wrongly But overall a great book on how to live a life that
is pleasing to the Lord Highly recommended. A great read It
took me a long time, but I finally finished it Holiness constantly
looks Christward, exhorting Christians in the living of a holy life
One of the most often quoted texts was Hebrews 12 14 Strive
for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no
one will see the Lord This seems to be a somewhat forgotten
verse in our day May we strive daily for greater holiness and
conformity to Christ and His Word. This review so far refers
only to chapter VII Assurance pp 143 181 Another reading with
me doing plenty of underlining throughout One line of truth
even had me updating my Facebook profile quotations since I
resonated with it so much Reading this chapter wasn t all roses
for me, however I felt that I didn t share the experience he
described as so common among Christian believers a lack of
assurance but by the end of the chapter I was chalking it up to
cultural differences and semantics I appreciated that he
centered his talk on so many Biblical examples, especially
using the experience of Paul, my favorite apostle, and he was
exceedingly sensitive to the nuances required and difficulties
presented when attempting to clarify elements of Christian
experience i.e no one can speak for another s heart. Though
assurance was the topic, he completed the chapter with
timeless nuggets of advice for the Christian journeyer, no
matter what his or her experience of assurance may be Seek
durable riches, a treasure that cannot be taken from you, a city
which hath lasting foundations Come away from a world which
will never really satisfy you p 178 and Stick not at the

foundations of religion go on to perfection Be not content with a day of small things Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourself p 179 These are serious writings for serious times I ll look forward to encouragement from this work and others like it as I continue my own life journey.



