

# Proper and Improper Candidates.

by Harmon A. Baldwin

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*To be a proper candidate for entire sanctification, one must be clearly converted and still walking in all the light.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 66:18, Proverbs 28:13, Romans 6:6, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Sanctification", "Repentance"

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## Description

Harmon A. Baldwin preaches about the importance of understanding who are proper candidates for holiness or entire sanctification. He emphasizes that those who have never been converted, backsliders in heart, and those living inconsistent lives are not suitable candidates for sanctifying grace. Baldwin highlights the necessity of repentance, clear conversion, and a changed life as prerequisites for seeking the experience of holiness.

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## Transcript

The first question to be settled by seekers of holiness, or entire sanctification, is whether or not they are proper candidates to receive this inestimable grace. One thing is true, much of what is called holiness teaching these days is not properly such, since it is given to those who are as unfit to receive its benefits as a swine's nose is unfit for a jewel of gold, and who would, therefore, be sure to degrade the holy profession to their own unholy purposes. The average professor of to-day is an unfit subject for sanctifying grace, until he first repents of his crookedness and takes the way of the cross,

We desire to show, first, who are not; secondly, who are, proper candidates for this experience.

I. Who are not proper candidates.

1. The person who has never been converted cannot be sanctified wholly, for it is a work of grace received by faith subsequent to that of justification. On this question we need have very little controversy, for in all ages of Christendom no other doctrine has been taught except by very few men in comparatively recent years. The creeds and confessions of church bodies and theological, devotional and biographical writings generally are replete with testimonies in favor of holiness as a second work of grace. So numerous are they that if we should attempt to transcribe them, we would scarcely know where to end. About the only thing on which they disagree is with reference to the time subsequent to conversion when one may be sanctified.

People take on a profession of religion in some evangelistic meeting, and, afterward, realizing that their experiences are unsatisfactory, are persuaded that what they need is holiness. But this in most cases is not true. What they need is to be so thoroughly saved from sin that they will get out of the seventh chapter of Romans. Have you ever had a clear, positive conversion? and did you receive the witness of the Spirit unmistakably testifying to this fact? If not, stop seeking holiness as an advanced experience and ask God to save you from your sins.

2. The backslider in heart is not a proper subject for sanctifying grace. Some persons seem to think it necessary for them to get into a place where they no longer enjoy the blessing of God as they formerly did, where they are living a crooked, two-sided life, manifesting bad tempers and giving way to vicious appetites, in order that they must seek holiness to save them from all this. Such persons answer the Bible description which says, "The backslider in heart is filled with his own ways;" and the first thing necessary for one in this condition is, to be restored to the favor of God as in former years.

To determine your religious standing answer before God the following questions:

Have you the same victory over sin you formerly possessed?

Was the blessing you received the day you were converted the most wonderful you ever received?

Does God come to your heart now as he did formerly?

Have you the same earnestness for God's glory and the salvation of your friends you had formerly?

Do you have as great love for secret prayer as you had when you were first saved, or is the secret place sadly neglected?

Is it as easy to deny yourself now as formerly?

Is the cause of God uppermost in your mind, or can you easily find excuses to stay at home from meetings, or to neglect other religious duties?

Be careful, reader, for if the former days were better than these, in that proportion you have lost ground; and you must reach the high-water mark of past experience before you are ready to seek sanctification.

3. If you have been living an up-and-down life, and are under condemnation for neglect of duty, or for the indulgence of sinful tempers, words or actions, you are not a proper candidate for entire sanctification, and will not be, until you have repented and been forgiven. Some people vacillate between obedience and disobedience, between the favor and the disfavor of God. Sometimes they are on the mount of transfiguration, and at other times in the quagmire of doubt and uncertainty. At one time their consciences approve them, and at other times their consciences condemn them. Vacillating here and there, driven about by "every wind of doctrine" even their friends acknowledge that it is hard to tell where to find them at any given time. Such persons generally get "warmed up" during the revival meeting, and "run well for a season" -- until "something happens" -- then they are "down" until quarterly meeting, camp-meeting, or some other general service comes. Then they fall in line again, "work up" a good feeling, and are loud in their expressions of joy. You can depend on them, as seekers, at every camp-meeting; and, usually, toward the last of the meeting they will take the ground by storm. But two weeks later they are in the same old rut. Either their husbands, wives, neighbors, friends, enemies, the preacher, the church, the grocer, the plumber, or some one else, did not do things to suit their notion; and, as the old, chronic sore was

touched, the same old virus came out as before; and then for days and weeks everybody in the family and the church is in misery when they are around. Reader, do you belong to this class? If so, for your own soul's sake pray out today; get the victory, and keep it, and then go in for holiness; but stop trying to make yourself and the people think that what you need to save you from such a life is holiness. No; you need a thorough conversion which will save you from such inconsistencies of life.

How often you hear people saying, "My justified life was not satisfactory, I would fly off the handle, get angry, and say and do things I ought not to have said or done, and so made crooked paths for my feet; but when I got sanctified I quit getting angry, and have been making straight paths ever since." Saved people do not get angry, or, if they do, they sin and must be forgiven; or make crooked paths; and if the foregoing was your experience, you got converted instead of sanctified. And the fact that you live right now does not prove that you have holiness in the sense of entire sanctification. Can God justify a sinner who persists in his sins? The Bible says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66: 18). Also, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [his sins] shall have mercy."

4. It would be impossible to collect and refute all the erroneous ideas of different people in regard to the condition of those who need holiness. One class of persons allows some things while condemning those things allowed by another class, and you will notice that they allow the very things of which they have been guilty, and condemn those from which they were the most free. They make room for themselves to slip through. One man allows rebellion, "God told me to do something, and I said 'No,' and would not do it. Holiness saved me from saying no to God." Another allows anger, "In my justified experience I was always getting angry." Another allows pride, "Before I was sanctified I wore feathers, flowers and jewelry, but when I was sanctified I had to put all these away." Another allows dishonesty; and another uncleanness, as tobacco, snuff, etc. But conversion cleans a person up in these respects and helps him to live a clean, honest, righteous life.

II. The second question is, Who are proper candidates?

The answer is very simple: All who have been clearly converted, and are still walking in all the light. This looks clear at first sight, but the fact is that people's ideas of what constitutes conversion are so varied, and some of them so erroneous, that it is necessary briefly to state the marks of this experience, and also the steps necessary to its attainment, in order to help out any who may be in the dark.

By glaring, everyday facts we are forced to the conclusion that the great defect in modern holiness teaching is its tendency to belittle the glorious doctrine of justification by faith; and that this is done by superficial preachers of holiness to make room for their abnormal presentation of the experience of holiness. After minimizing or entirely overlooking regeneration and the consequent life of righteousness, they proceed at once to preach holiness to a congregation of worldly, unconverted professors, and exhort them to go up at once and possess the land. Its glories and beauties are set before them in such glowing terms that it causes a strong desire for its possession, even from a selfish standpoint. Tens, twenties, fifties, and even hundreds flock to the altar, and, with scarcely one thought of doing the thing that is the most necessary for them to do -- repent of their past sins and separate themselves from worldliness -- they submit to a given formula and profess holiness without having been converted, or even deeply convicted of sin. Such persons, by their crooked, and carnal lives linked to a profession of holiness, which they persist in publishing abroad, will as a natural consequence, bring reproach on the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. All, or nearly all, of this confusion would be avoided by properly presenting the Bible standard of justification.

To be clearly justified one must meet the following conditions: 1. Repent, and in the scriptural sense. Repentance is (1) A godly sorrow for sin; not the shedding of a few sentimental tears, nor sorrow because of the consequences of sin; but sorrow for sin because of its sinful nature. (2) Confession; to one's neighbors where they have been wronged; where no one in particular has been injured to God only. (3) Restitution of that which has been taken by theft or fraud, so far as possible. (4) Separation from sin, worldliness and worldly companionships. 2. Entire devotion of one's self and all he has to the service of God for time and eternity. 3. Faith in God. There are two kinds or degrees of faith necessary; (1) That general confidence in God taught in the words, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (2) Saving faith, or that which now takes hold of the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ and appropriates the same to the soul's needs.

4. It is also necessary in scriptural justification that the seeker receive the witness of the Spirit. Much might be written on this subject without making it one whit more clear than to say, It is an inward consciousness wrought by the Holy Ghost that past sins are forgiven, that the heart is renewed, and that the renewed man has become a tabernacle for the indwelling of God. The real witness of the Spirit cannot be mistaken. God testifies definitely, clearly, and beyond dispute, to his work. "Verily, verily, we speak that we do know."

A changed life will necessarily follow the reception of this experience. Old things are passed away. Sinful fashions, evil habits, wrath, frauds, thefts, drunkenness, blasphemy, in short, all wickedness is a thing of the past. Now the tree produces love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and all the beautiful fruits of the Spirit.

Let us propose a few questions by which you may weigh yourself and see if you are a proper person to begin seeking the experience of holiness.

1. Were you clearly converted? So clearly that you would dare risk your chances of heaven upon its certainty?
2. Is there a moment in your past experience to which you can point and say, "There old things passed away, and I passed from death unto life"?
3. Has your life been godly ever since?
4. Did you ever backslide? and if you did, were you as clearly reclaimed afterward as you were saved in the first place?
5. Do you have an inward realization that you please God?
6. Have you now the witness of the Spirit to your acceptance?
7. Is your daily life before your family, friends and enemies consistent with your profession?
8. Do you enjoy, or endure, your religion?
9. Do you delight yourself in the Lord? or do you serve him to escape hell?
10. Do you conquer the inward strivings of carnality? or do they conquer you?
11. Do you long to be made perfect in love?

If before God you can give satisfactory answers to these questions, you are in a good place, and may regard yourself as a promising candidate for all the fullness of God.

"Come, let us ascend,

My companion and friend,

To a taste of the banquet above;

If thy heart be as mine,

If for Jesus it pine,

Come up into the chariot of love."

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