

Holiness Conditioned

by James Blaine Chapman

The blessing of holiness is conditioned upon faith, which is the prime condition for receiving the blessing.

Scripture: Acts 26:18, Romans 10:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 11:6, James 2:17

Topics: "Sanctification", "Faith Alone"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches on the importance of being sanctified by faith, emphasizing the conditions set by God for His promises to be fulfilled. He explains that cooperation between God and ourselves is necessary for salvation, including the prerequisites of a clear experience of justification, desire for holiness, determination to have the blessing, and consecration. Chapman highlights the prime condition for holiness as faith, illustrating that faith is the essential foundation for obtaining the blessing of sanctification.

Transcript

Sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

The promises of God all have conditions. Sometimes the conditions are clearly stated, sometimes they are implied, but always they exist. Our sin is our own responsibility. Redemption through the blood of Jesus was arranged and carried through without our knowledge or consent. But salvation implies and requires cooperation between God and ourselves.

We are assured by the Scriptures that it is the will of God for us to be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3). We are further assured that the redemptive work of Christ included merit for this perfect cleansing, as well as the pardon of our guilt for transgression. Assuming now that we, through the reading of the Word of God, through the sense of our own inner need, through the testimony of those who have apprehended this grace, and through the work of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts and consciences, have become aware of our need, and have been stirred to a deep desire to have this need supplied, we may now come with profit to an examination of the things that we must have and do in order to realize this wonderful inheritance.

I. THE PREREQUISITES

1. A clear experience of justification

In mathematics they have what are called axioms. These are facts so evident in character as to require no proof. For example, it is said, as an axiom, that "the whole is greater than any of its parts." Now this is a

maxim that is universally accepted, and for one to offer proof of its truth would be to weary the listeners without the least possibility of helping them. The statement that regeneration is the prerequisite of sanctification is in the nature of an axiom in connection with the subject now before us.

In His great high-priestly prayer for His disciples (seventeenth chapter of St. John), Jesus said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." Jesus did pray for sinners on the cross, at which time He cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." But when He prayed for His disciples to be sanctified, He expressly limited His prayer to include only those who were not of the world but of God.

And, in the nature of things, only those who have been born of the Spirit can be proper candidates for the baptism with the Spirit. The necessity here is clear if one considers the analogy with reference to the world of physical nature; for there, undoubtedly, birth must always precede baptism.

It has been claimed that Christians in a backslidden condition have been stirred with conviction and have come to God supposedly seeking sanctification, and in the process of seeking sanctification have been reclaimed and restored to fellowship with God, and then have gone out to claim "the second blessing." And there is little doubt that such instances are on record. But this does not affect our axiom that a good state of regeneration and justification is a prerequisite for obtaining the grace and blessing of sanctification.

It does happen, as many will testify, that when a professing Christian becomes awakened to his need of holiness, and when he sets his soul to obtain the blessing, he may discover that his standing with God as a justified Christian is in doubt or even in unquestioned dilapidation. But when this discovery is made, the call to holiness becomes also, and in a preferred sense, a call to repentance, and to faith for reclamation to favor and assurance with God.

Yet it is the experience of all justified Christians that it is at the time of their high spiritual tide that they are the most deeply conscious of their need to be sanctified and made perfect in love. John Wesley urged newly converted people to press on into holiness before there was any cooling of their new found love. And the basic argument for the claim that sanctification invariably comes after justification is that sanctification requires conditions which one cannot meet until he has been justified.

Dr. Beverly Carradine testified that for twelve years before receiving the blessing of holiness he never laid his head upon his pillow a single night until he had prayed through to a definite sense of pardon and acceptance with God. Evangelist M. L. Haney in his testimony recorded in *Inheritance Restored* relates a story of prayer, testimony, soul winning, and personal "shouting victory" beginning many months before and leading right up to the hour when he set in definitely to seek and obtain the blessing of holiness.

A young man once came to me for a conference, asking that I attempt to show him from the Scriptures that "sanctification is a second blessing." Knowing that spiritual perception is more of the heart than of the head, I asked him whether he was at the moment in a good state of grace. With little hesitation he told me that he was not. He said he had known a good Christian experience, but was at the moment in a backslidden condition. I told him that it would likely be impossible for me to talk helpfully with him on sanctification, since his real concern was and should be for justification, which required no argument on my part, since he really already knew the way. I suggested therefore that we pass over the matter of holiness for the time being, and concentrate on prayer and faith for his reclamation. And I assured him that few people are benefited by endeavoring to find additional light until they were ready and willing to walk in

the light already received.

On the basis of our thought here, some have said that we should not preach holiness in the presence of the unconverted, seeing that they are not ready to receive it. But, in the first place, unless we preach holiness in the presence of the unconverted, we shall not often preach it at all; for all the services of the church are open to the public, and there are few meetings, even prayer meetings, in which there are no unsaved people present; and in the meetings when there are no unsaved persons present, there is but a small proportion of the church on hand. And in the second place, just as the preaching of Canaan was an inducement to the Israelites to leave Egypt, so the preaching of holiness stirs up desire for God and hope for salvation in the hearts of the unconverted. I can myself testify to this good effect; for when I was as yet an unconverted lad, I listened to the prayers, testimonies, sermons, and shouts of victory of God's holy people, and said within my own heart: "I like that kind of religion, and if I ever get religion that is the kind I am going to have."

2. Desire for holiness

Dr. A. M. Hills, in *Holiness and Power*, makes distinction between "conviction for guilt" which the unconverted feel in the presence of the work of God's Spirit, and "conviction of want" which Christians feel when that same Holy Spirit calls them to holiness. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father . . . draw him," and we may also say that no man can be sanctified except the Holy Spirit draw him to it. But since the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit is a dependable axiom, we may speak rather of the results, and say that a deep and real desire to be sanctified wholly is a basic prerequisite for obtaining the blessing.

It is not enough to be negatively willing. It is required that we be positively desirous. Seth C. Rees testified that his conviction for holiness was even deeper and more keen than his conviction for guilt had been.

But even though it is the work of the Holy Spirit to awaken this desire within us, it is required of us that we seek to promote that desire by all possible means: by pondering the commandments and promises of God; by dwelling upon the prayers and testimonies of others, especially of the men and women of the Bible; by observing the advantages that those of our acquaintances who have the blessing have over us; and by bringing ourselves into the presence of tasks that should be done, but cannot be done without the fullness of the blessing of the gospel upon us.

3. Determination to have the blessing

Desire is of the heart, determination is of the will, but both the heart and the mind are involved in the commandment to be holy. There comes the time when the seeker for this blessing must determine to have it. This does not mean that he comes to think of himself as master of the will of God; rather he comes to the place where he determines that the will of God shall be wrought out in him.

A woman once approached J. Wilbur Chapman and said she had been praying for the salvation of her brother, who was a worldly man, given to drink and to the pleasures of the flesh. But now she said she had become uncertain about her course, lest she should be asking God to interfere with her brother's free will. The evangelist replied: "Your worries are unfounded. It is the devil who is binding your brother's will, and your prayers are that God may break the power of Satan so your brother can really exercise his will freely." And this illustrates our thought here. Determination to be sanctified wholly is not determination to have this blessing whether God wills it or not; rather, it is a determination that nothing shall be permitted

longer to hinder the will of God in the matter. We are already assured both by the Word of God and our own sound human judgment that it is the will of God for us, and all God's true children, to be sanctified. It is the devil and the world that hold us back from receiving the blessing, and now we have reached the point where these powers are not to be allowed to hold us longer.

An old man in West Virginia was left alone. His wife died, his children married and moved into a Western state and set up their homes. The old man was in fair financial circumstances, but he was frugal and cautious about expenditures. The children in the West often asked him to come out to see them, and he always desired very much to go. With each succeeding invitation, his desire increased. Thrice he went down to the railway station and made inquiry about train schedules and fares. His was a small town, and he was a well-known person in the community. The railway agent therefore became accustomed to these periodical inquiries, and always patiently gave in full detail the information asked, always concluding with a statement as to the fare. Finally, one of the daughters from the West wrote to say that the grandchildren were growing up, having never seen their grandfather, that the cares of home made it impossible for them to come back to the old place, and that they were all getting uneasy now lest they should never see their father and grandfather in this world. The letter moved the old man so that his desire ripened into determination. This time he packed his traveling bag, made his way down to the station, and went to the ticket window to make inquiry about train schedules. The agent got out his big book, traced up the schedules, enumerated the changes that were to be made, and stated the time the train would arrive at the destination. Then, as he had done three times before, he stated the amount of the fare. But the old man was not well pleased with this last item, and said: "I did not ask you how much is the fare. That item has kept me from seeing my children and grandchildren far too long. I decided to pay the fare this time before I came to the station. All I ask now is that you sell me the ticket -- I have determined to pay the fare."

4. Consecration

Consecration is really human sanctification, and this is the meaning of the word in the Old Testament when people are called upon to sanctify themselves. Our fathers used to say, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." And we may put it down as a principle that we are never in earnest about a prayer for God to do something for us unless and until we are ready and willing to do that thing ourselves to the measure of our power.

I knew a man who prayed often that God would deliver him from the power of the tobacco habit. But this prayer was never effective until one day he threw his tobacco away, and said: "I am through. If God wants to deliver me from the power of this drug, I shall be thankful. But whether He delivers me or not, I am determined to die clean." And within a matter of days the craving for tobacco was gone, and the man was free.

Now to be holy means to be wholly the Lord's. Consecration is the limit of the human power in thus becoming wholly the Lord's. Therefore, full consecration is a prerequisite of sanctification. There were some Pottawatomie Indians in our group in the Indian Territory forty-five years ago. They told the story of one Indian who came and heard the message of holiness, and heard it said that one must give all he has to God in order to get this blessing. And, later, in telling his own experience, this Indian said: "I brought my pony and put him on the altar -- but no blessing came. I added my blanket and my teepee -- still there was no blessing. Then I added my squaw and my papoose -- and still there was no blessing. But when in addition to all these, I cried, 'And this poor Indian, too, O Lord!' the blessing came."

The meaning of consecration has seldom been better given than in the beautiful words of that saintly soul, Frances Ridley Havergal, who for her own soul's prayer detailed it thus:

Take my life, and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing

Always, only for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold;

Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my will and make it Thine;

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart; it is Thine own!

It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour

At Thy feet its treasure-store.

Take myself and I will be,

Ever, only, all for Thee.

John S. Inskip found this a useful formula: "O Lord, I am, henceforth and forever, wholly Thine," and he used to urge seekers for holiness to say these words until they could really and truly say them. When one has said these words from his heart, there is no more that he can say.

No Christian is of so little worth that his insignificance will keep him out of the blessing, and no Christian has so much that he can get the blessing while yet holding back anything at all. With everyone, it is "give all and get all," or hold back a little and get no blessing at all.

And now we come to: II. THE PRIME CONDITION

The prime condition for the blessing of holiness is faith. We have spoken of desire, determination and consecration as prerequisites, because they are in the nature of foundation stones for faith, rather than factors of equal rank with faith. They are essential, since faith will not function without them. But still they can exist without faith, and the blessing will not be obtained. Faith is the one condition that is never absent when the blessing comes, and the one condition that can never be met without the blessing's following.

It is not within the scope of our present purpose to discuss the nature of faith. But, assuming that the meaning of faith is sufficiently known to enable us to fill out the want of completeness that must always pertain to brevity of statement, we affirm that faith is believing God or believing what God has said. In this sense, the essential sense, faith is as simple as the definition is short. We have faith when we believe God or believe what God has said.

We must not overlook the depth of the statement, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." There is a form and degree of belief that stops with intellectual persuasion. But the faith that brings the power of God to bear goes deeper than that, and involves the heart as well as the head. This element that involves the heart is especially the personal element. I may say I believe that God is able and willing to make those who seek Him in faith holy in their hearts -- this is belief just as intellectual persuasion. But it must become a heart matter before I can say, "I believe that God does here and now save me from all sin."

In a certain central Texas county seat town in the old days, the problem of stock water was a big one, especially on "first Monday," when people from the country came with their work stock and their "trading stock" to meet their neighbors and buy and sell and "swap." There was no modern water system, and no public power system of any kind. An enterprising young salesman sold to the town, through its official board, a newly invented pumping system in which the weight of the animal, by means of a rather complicated mechanism, furnished power to bring water from the public well to satisfy that animal's thirst. When all the conditions were met, the system was "automatic." But the conditions involved getting the animal to be watered to walk up on a platform of wood where the potential power represented by the animal's weight was transferred to the mechanized pump. All worked well, when the animal co-operated. But an animal from a Western pasture usually looked with suspicion upon any sort of a contraption which served to get him off the familiar earth. Sometimes it required the assistance of many a man and boy to get a colt to take his place on that wooden platform. It made no difference what else the animal did, there was no water in the drinking trough until he got up on that platform. Coming near would not get the results. Approaching the trough from the side was to find it dry. But animals that came boldly and stepped up on the platform were never disappointed, for their weight set the mechanism in motion, and quantities of fresh, clear, cool water came pouring into the drinking trough.

This story represents the situation with reference to the blessings of holiness. The well is like the first prerequisite we mentioned -- being truly regenerated and right with God. The mechanism represents the other prerequisites -- desire, determination, and consecration. The platform represents faith -- the actual and prime condition. And the water represents the Holy Spirit, who comes in cleansing, refreshing fullness whenever we step out on the platform of faith.

The reality of this blessing is by very nature a matter for personal consciousness. Everything is ready. There are others who testify that the conditions met bring results. But you, the only way you can know is to come yourself. As others stood about looking on, David called to them saying, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" And that is the call I make to you today. This question is subject to the laboratory of your

own heart and life. You have this blessing instrumented by the Word of God. You have it imputed to you by the blood of Jesus. Now here it is conditioned upon faith. The prerequisites of faith are plain. You can fulfill them, and know you have done so. Then you can take this final step of faith, and know for yourself that the work is done.

We may sit in a well-lighted church building. Somewhere there is a power plant where electric current is generated. There are cables and wires that lead from that power plant right to the building. The building has been wired and furnished with fixtures and equipment designed to transfer that electric current into light. All these things were done before there was any light. They are all essential, and if any of them are neglected or absent there will be no light. Yet with all these there still is no light, for we have yet to mention one thing more, and that is the switch. Somewhere about the building there is a break which separates the fixtures in the building from the current that comes from the power plant. And so long as that break is there, there can be no light, even though the power plant is running at top speed, even though all the cables and wires are intact, even though the fixtures and equipment for transforming the current into light are all in place and in good repair. But with these prerequisites all met, we are ready now for the condition. We are ready for faith. Let us be sure all is finished and right -- yes, all is finished and right. Very well, now we press the button and close the switch, and, lo, here is the light! That is what happens when our faith takes hold of the promise.

A young sailor was being verbally examined concerning the ship's equipment for pumping water in case of a fire aboard. "What would you do to start the pumps, if a fire should break out?" asked the examiner. "I would close the switch on the motor," replied the sailor. "But suppose no water came from the nozzle?" "Then I would examine the connections to see if the current was getting through." "But suppose you found all in order, and still there was no water?" "Then I would examine the hose to see if there was a leak." "But suppose there were no leak?" The young sailor had covered all the items he could think of which might cause failure of the pumping system, so he said, "Well, then I would go to the rail and look over to see if the ocean had gone dry." And that is what you, my Christian friend, should say in the present instance, if you fulfill all the prerequisites and meet the prime condition, if something does not happen. But, thank God, something will happen, for the ocean of God's love and grace and power is full and there can be no failure.

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