

Holiness Differentiated

by James Blaine Chapman

Holiness is a state of being, not a process of purifying, and involves a complete absence of sin and a complete presence of good.

Scripture: Luke 1:73, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Sanctification"

Description

James Blaine Chapman discusses the distinction between purity and maturity in the context of Christian perfection, emphasizing that while purity can be obtained instantly, maturity is a lifelong process of growth, trial, and development. He highlights that sanctification must be instantaneous, with a last moment of sin and a first moment of complete holiness. Chapman also delves into the relationship between the body, soul, and spirit, asserting that holiness is a matter of the heart and spirit, not dependent on the physical body. He concludes by stating that holiness of heart does not guarantee perfect conduct, but rather obedience based on the knowledge of God's will.

Transcript

A minister sat by me on the train one day and said, "You preach Christian perfection. Please give me a type of the perfect Christian." I replied that I did not have a type ready to hand, and that I would be glad to consider the one he doubtless would propose.

He answered, "I would take good, pure flower seeds and plant them in well-prepared soil and protect the growing plant from the elements until the stock is grown to full height and the flowers are in full bloom. And when the stock is grown and the flower full, there is a type of Christian perfection."

But I answered, "You confuse purity and maturity. The perfect Christian is a pure Christian, but not necessarily a mature Christian. The plant of which you speak is a good type of Christian perfection all the way along, if the plant is what it should be at that stage and is perfectly free from disease."

Purity and maturity! The words are similar in sound, but they are very distinct in meaning. Purity may be found in the earliest moments after a soul finds pardon and peace with God. But maturity involves time and growth and trial and development. The pure Christian may even be a weak Christian. For it is not size or strength that is emphasized, but only the absence of evil and the presence of elementary good. Purity is obtained as a crisis; maturity comes as a process. One can be made pure in the twinkling of an eye; it is doubtful that anyone in this world should be listed as really mature. Growth continues while life lasts, and

for aught we know, it may continue throughout eternity.

Since all virtues are capable of enlargement, it is easy to fall into the error of attributing degrees of holiness, so that one may easily imagine that he will finally grow into purity. More faith, more love, more hope, and more patience incline one to think that at some undefined time he will have none of the opposites of these. But growth is not a process for purifying. Growth is addition; purifying is subtraction. And even though one may approach holiness by ever so gradual a process, there must be a last moment when sin exists and the first moment when it is all gone, and that means that in reality sanctification must be instantaneous. At this or any given moment every Christian is either free from sin or he is not free from sin. There can be no sense in which he is actually holy and at the same time still somewhat defiled. There can be no such thing as purer than pure or holier than holy. Those who think otherwise have a concept of holiness that is more formal and external than that which is presented as evangelical holiness in the New Testament.

The body is the home of the soul and is subject to it, so that the body within itself is incapable of moral character or responsible action. The body can be sinned against, but it cannot sin. It may be the instrument of sin, but there is no sin resident in it apart from the spirit. Man's personality is inherent in his spirit, and he is either sinful or holy independent of his body. If he is sinful in spirit he will use his body as a tool of unrighteousness. If he is holy in spirit he will use his body as a channel through which to do holy and righteous deeds. Whatever a man is--sinful or holy--in his body, he would be the same out of his body. Those who think they will be holy when they die, and just because they die, are entirely mistaken. Death brings separation of soul and body, but it does not in any way affect the moral and spiritual state or standing of the person involved.

There is a distinction between the mind and the immortal spirit, but this is a distinction exceedingly difficult to make. The Word of God is said to be a two-edged Sword that can divide asunder the soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12), but this statement within itself is indicative of the delicacy of the task. However, we must know that the mind, too as described in the intellectual life, is incapable of moral choice or action except it be directed by the deeper powers of the spirit. There is no moral quality in dreams, because there is no choice of will involved. Passing thoughts of evil have no moral quality until they are given cognizance by the will. Speaking of the fact that temptation is not sin until we yield to it, and that thoughts of evil are often involuntary, one has said, "We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from making nests in our hair." When thoughts of evil are willingly entertained they become evil thoughts, and then they are blameworthy. But the adjusted will and purified affections of a fully sanctified Christian bring the thoughts and imaginations of the mind and heart into captivity of obedience to Christ, and every willing thought and every entertained imagination becomes the product and servant of good. Insanity is mental disease and has no more moral quality than physical disease; and although holiness of heart may not actually keep one from becoming mentally unbalanced, it will keep him from any choice of will that would be displeasing to God.

And, finally, conduct depends upon light as well as upon grace. Therefore holiness of heart does not imply perfect conduct. The holy do right, "as they are given to know the right," and that is the end of the law. The perfect law of God is based upon the divine character ("Be ye holy; for I am holy"), and is therefore invariable in heaven and on earth. But where no knowledge is, there is no responsibility. Hence the law of love is the law of conduct for holy men on earth as for holy angels in heaven. We know in part, and therefore cannot do the whole. But the promise is that we shall be able to walk before God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives (Luke 1: 73-75). This means that God, who knows how much we

know, gives us credit for full obedience when we obey to the full measure of our knowledge of His will. Therefore one who is but a novice in grace, and who is weak in spiritual might, sick or deformed in body, and limited in intellect, can yet be holy in heart. And holiness is the quality without which we cannot see God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-blaine-chapman/holiness-differentiated/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net