

How I Became Interested in Bible Holiness

by James Blaine Chapman

The speaker shares his personal experience of coming to faith and experiencing sanctification, emphasizing the importance of holiness in the Christian life.

Scripture: Romans 6:22, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 4:24, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Sanctification"

Description

James Blaine Chapman shares his personal journey towards holiness, recounting how he was drawn to the message of holiness preachers and eventually experienced the transformative power of God's sanctifying grace. Through the preaching of R. L. Averill, Chapman learned about the doctrine of holiness as the demand of God's law, the provision of Christ's atonement, and the work of the Holy Spirit. He witnessed the joy and dedication of a community of believers who testified to God's forgiveness and sanctification, inspiring him to seek the same experience. Chapman emphasizes that holiness is the heart of Christian experience, involving the crises of regeneration and entire sanctification, leading to a life of growth and progress empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

My father had removed his family into a new country community. By special appointment, Rev. Albright was preaching at the neighborhood schoolhouse. During the second service I became interested in the man and the message he seemed to have for the people. Addressing my neighbor in the seat beside me, I asked in a low whisper, "What kind of a preacher is Mr. Albright?" The reply, "A holiness preacher." "Wherein do holiness preachers differ from other preachers?" "I cannot answer that. Perhaps you will be able to see the difference if you listen to this man." I listened, but I could see nothing objectionable in what this man said, so I set him up as the standard and reasoned that those who differed from him must be just that much aside from the center. So, although not yet a Christian, I came soon to think of myself as somewhat "bent" toward the holiness people.

It was early spring when I heard Mr. Albright. In September the holiness camp meeting came on. The distance from our house was about six miles, and in those "horse and buggy days," this was an hour's travel. I went the first night, only to be disappointed by the failure of the evangelist to arrive for that first service. I missed a night, and then came again to find the meeting in good swing. The evangelist was R. L. Averill from Texas. Night after night he chose the plainest texts and expounded the doctrine of holiness.

He held up holiness as the demand of God's law, the provision of Christ's atonement, and the special work of the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation. He showed that men must be holy to get to heaven, and that they must obtain this blessing in the world. He showed from the Bible, the hymns of the Church, and the testimony of men that men are sanctified after they are justified, and that we are made holy by being sanctified wholly after we are justified, and that on this account it is, as John Wesley said, "a second blessing, properly so-called."

But it was not the preaching alone that interested me. There was a small but happy band of people ever ready to stand and testify to the marvelous manner in which God had forgiven their sins and subsequently sanctified them wholly. They sang joyfully, gave liberally, and worked incessantly. Their religion was manifestly a great boon to them, and I could not resist wishing I had what they said they had, and what they really seemed to possess.

One of the favorite songs was number one hundred in old Tears and Triumph Number Two. It was based on the fifty-first psalm, and the first stanza went as follows:

Wash me thoroughly, blessed Saviour;

Cleanse me from indwelling sin.

Bathe me in the sacred fountain;

Now complete Thy work within.

Every time this song was repeated it seemed to increase in its meaning for me until at last I found myself saying, "If I ever get religion, I want the kind this song represents."

At the end of ten days the evangelist had to pass on to his next engagement. But the people felt they had not yet had the results they desired, so they decided to run the meeting for a few nights more, such preachers as chanced to come along taking the meetings for them from night to night. And how thankful I am that they had that extra week! For it was during that week that I was brought under conviction for sin and came to the public altar to pray and seek the Lord. That first time at the altar marked the crisis, and Christ came and forgave my sins and gave me a new heart. But I had seen the Land of Canaan before I ever left Egypt, and so pressed right on to get sanctification. So when the camp meeting closed I was clear in the experience of Bible holiness and was already giving clear and definite testimony to the fact that I had found what the preachers had preached and what the Christians had declared.

That was in September, 1899. But today, after these passing years, I am happy in the full grace of heart holiness, and have come to say a few things about this blessed experience to the young people of this day. The majority who read these words will no doubt be older in years than I was when I found this blessed grace, so I feel that I am not imposing upon them the words of an elder who passed his youth in a manner he is unwilling to recommend to others. Rather, I come to say that God has been so real and so satisfying to me from that night when as a lad of fifteen He came into my heart in full sanctifying grace that I can wish for all that they may find Him early, as I did, and that I am assured they will have no regrets with the passing years.

I have called holiness the heart of Christian experience because it is, by way of the full realization of what God had promised to us in the way of crises. Regeneration and entire sanctification are the two crises in which God deals with the sin problem in us and by which He takes us out of sin and then takes sin out of

us. After that the Christian life is a way of process and progress, but there are no more crises until glorification comes at the return of Jesus to this world. There is all room for growth after sanctification, but there is no more place for crises. There is no state of grace beyond a pure heart filled with the Holy Spirit. But from such a heart flow forth the passive and the active phases of Christian life as water flows forth from a spring. Holiness is purity--not maturity. Holiness is the goal only in that it prepares one for whatever there is of Christian life--it is the "enabling blessing" which every Christian needs.

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