

Holiness Exhibited

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon explores the transformative power of holiness in the life of a believer, emphasizing its role in enabling righteous living and godly character.

Topics: "Holy Living", "Spiritual Empowerment"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches on the importance of living a holy and blameless life before God, as exemplified by Elisha's continuous display of holiness. He emphasizes the need for believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, as instructed in Titus 2:11-12. Chapman discusses the empowerment of holiness in enabling Christians to face life's challenges with the fullness of the Spirit, to love their neighbors genuinely, and to reflect God's nature in their character and conduct.

Transcript

Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually (II Kings 4:9).

Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe (I Thessalonians 2:10).

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life (Luke 1:73-75).

As a rule men do not scruple to claim to be in good physical health, when such is their fortunate estate, nor do they hesitate to admit being "of sound mind, and in possession of all their mental faculties." But instinctively, men are slow to say their spiritual estate is of commendable status.

The reason for this reluctance to testify to what the grace of God has accomplished may not be uniform, but it may well be admitted that the necessity for proving one's claims by a life consistent with such claims may have considerable force. Paul called upon the Philippian Christians to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"

(Philippians 2:12-13). God works in our hearts, and then we are to work out the interpretation of this inward grace in our words and deeds. St. James was hewing close to the line of ordinary human practice when he imagined one who hears a Christian testimony immediately calls for works to justify such a testimony.

Some have thought of the profession of holiness as serving principally to lift the standard of practical living higher than it has previously been, and consequently making it more difficult than ever to live the Christian life. But the fact is that the standard of God's Word for all men is holiness of both heart and life. That some fall short of this standard does not serve to modify the standard, and does not prove that the standard is impossible of approximation. It proves only that the person in question does not possess the strength and power demanded by such a standard.

What holiness does really do is to bring new strength and power to bear upon the old task. It is like an increase of income in the economic life without a corresponding increase in the cost of living. Such an increase means simply greater comfort in living the life one has always been striving to live. This is why Professor Rhinehart could say that "sanctification is regeneration made easy." Holiness is empowerment to live the life the Christian has striven to live ever since he was converted.

Paul was tormented by a "thorn in the flesh." We are nowhere told what this thorn was, and speculation has ranged from sore eyes to a face scarred by smallpox, and on to a natural homeliness augmented by a squeaky voice. But whatever it was, Paul stirred himself up to pray for its removal -- prayed three times earnestly before an answer came. And when the answer came, it was not an announcement of the removal of his thorn, but the good news that God was going to give him more grace. That is the way it works with all our burdens. That is the way it works regarding the general demands of the Christian course. God does not let down the standards to make it easy for us; rather, He gives us clean hearts filled with perfect love and thus enables us to do what had hitherto been impossible to us.

Getting sanctified does not guarantee a change in our environment in home or shop or office or field or church. But it does guarantee grace sufficient to enable us to receive the agreeable without pride, to take the disagreeable without discouragement, and to "co-operate with the inevitable" without inner objection or outward complaint. In other words, holiness is the balancing of the inner power against the outer demands, and the giving of the advantage to the inner power. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

Just in summarizing the passages quoted in the beginning: Elisha's deportment was such that one observing him over a period of time would find indicated in his life the existence of a holy heart as the source of such a life. Our hearts cannot be made holy by means of improved outward conduct. But the creation of a clean heart within is sure to find exhibition in an outside life that corresponds with its spring and source in the heart. John Wesley's "ten greatest sayings" include his claim, "Our people die well." But only people who live well die well. Living grace becomes dying grace when life gives way to death. And only holiness gives people the power to live holy lives. Paul could clinch his argument for the doctrine of holiness which he was about to propound in his letter to the Thessalonians by calling attention to the fact that he and his co-laborers had, while among the Thessalonians, lived holy, blameless lives themselves. This was in the nature of a dangerous claim, but Paul made it without apology because he was sure their examples had justified the claim. God's promise, confirmed as an oath, that He would grant deliverance from our enemies and give us power to live before Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives is quoted without either apology or explanation. It is just such as we would expect of a holy God who

is concerned for the present and final salvation of those who put their trust in Him.

Now we take up the verse from Titus. Evangelist Sam Jones has left us an outline of the standard involved in being a Christian, as taken from this verse, as follows: (1) Soberly -- within ourselves; (2) Righteously -- in conduct toward our neighbors; and (3) Godly -- in our attitude and conduct with God.

It would scarcely be possible to add to or take from the scope covered by this brief outline. To face life and its problems soberly, to fulfill all obligations to our fellow men righteously, and to be absorbed into the character of the object of our worship -- surely these are our goals, and beyond these none can hope to go.

I. LIVING SOBERLY

St. Paul drew the contrast when he said, "Be not with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Men do not, as a rule, become drunkards because of their love for the taste of liquor. They take to drink as a method of escaping from the realities and burdens of life. No one can deny that such an escape is desirable. The fault is that it is sought in the substitute instead of in the true way. The true way is the way of the fullness of the Spirit, whose invigoration and uplift are real, and not imaginary like that of wine.

In this fullness of the Spirit one can face the problems and realities of life without cringing, and without fear. Life is real, temptations are real, trials are real, burdens and cares are real, sickness and poverty are real, death is real; and holiness enables us to face them all without either attempting to ignore them or surrendering to their power.

II. LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY

A man is not a truthful man just because he tells the truth. He may tell the truth because he is paid to do so, or he may tell the truth for the purpose of injuring another. The truthful man is one who desires to tell the truth, and who speaks the truth in his heart. Statements agreeable to these are applicable also to honesty, purity, and kindness. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Holiness enables one to love his neighbor as himself, and this eradicates all desire for anything that will injure his neighbor, and gives rise to only those emotions and desires that will promote his neighbor's good. This grace delivers from envy of another's position, coveting of another's property, and discontent with one's own lot as compared with others. And from such a state and condition of heart no evil can arise. The holy man lives a righteous life without having to strain to do so.

When asked what advantage his experience of holiness was to him in living the Christian life, a layman of my acquaintance said: "Well, I used to have to pray a long time to come to where I truly loved those who did me wrong. But this blessing enables me to love such immediately, and I can spend time praying for those who have wronged me, instead of having to pray for myself in order to get to where I can pray for them." In saving us from the desire to do anyone wrong, and saving us from the desire to do everyone good, the grace and blessing of holiness enables us to live righteously toward our neighbors all the days of our lives.

III. LIVING GODLY

When we come to speak of living godly, there is immediate tendency to say, "This is impossible." And we do know that God is infinite in goodness, wisdom, and power, while we are finite in all these and have no

goodness unless God gives it to us. So we know the intention cannot be for us to be gods, or for us to be on equality with God. It is only that by His grace we are to have His nature implanted within us, that we may be like God in the sense that a drop of water is like the ocean.

A visitor at the World Exhibition in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907, reported his seeing a remarkable exhibit representing time-keeping inventions.

"There was," he said, "at one end of the line what was said to be the largest clock ever manufactured -- it looked like a building large enough for a family to live in. Next to this was a smaller clock of the colossal class, and on down to the smallest pattern in this line. Then came a hall clock, a mantle clock, a still smaller pattern, and on down to the smallest clock of this type. Then there were big pocket watches, followed by smaller watches, and on down at the end of the whole line was a little wrist watch so small that a magnifying glass was required for one to see the marks on the dial. But all the timepieces in the line were in good repair, and well regulated, so that when the big clock at the top said, 'Twelve o'clock,' every clock and every watch along the line, even to the little wrist watch at the end, also said, 'Twelve o'clock.' "

Perhaps this may suggest what it means for finite men to be godly. The reference is not to quantity but to quality, and even the quality is not a factor detached. The holy man is godly because he is indwelt by the Divine Spirit, and is partaker of the divine nature.

It is to be observed that these items in the standard for Christians are said to have their application in "this present world." This is not an ideal for heaven, but a standard for earth. Right here where sin is rife, where Satan is turned loose, and where the flesh is weak, we are to receive power to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Does anyone ask, "Can God give such power to men?" Such a question is to cast doubt upon God's ability. Does anyone ask, "Is God willing to give this power to His children?" Such a question is to reflect upon God's goodness. Does anyone ask, "Does God have a plan or method for transmuting such power to His children?" Such a question calls in question God's wisdom. There is no escape from the conclusion that God can and will and does give this wonderful grace to those who ask it at His hand.

Is there any sin too big for God to save from its guilt, defilement, and power? No, thank God, there is no such sin, seeing our God has all power in heaven -- the spiritual realm, as well as on earth -- the material realm. Is any sin too small for His saving power to be directed to it? No, for God is the God of the microscope as well as the God of the telescope. Is anyone too weak and too insignificant to become the subject of God's saving and sanctifying fullness? No, thank God, no! For since the excellency of the power is of God and not of us, it often happens that when we are weak, then we are strong, and the promise is to "willing and obedient," and there is no reference to natural ability or position. The holiness of God imparted to the heart of the Christian is God's proffered heritage for every soul. And the life supported by this grace is able to stand up under the strain, and to manifest an example to all that will cause the unprejudiced to say, "I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually." And this testimonial will apply to women in the home, to men in the shops and on the street, to invalids in their chairs, and to saints on their dying couches. The truly holy man makes good, so neither he nor others have to make excuses for him.

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