

Holiness in the Teachings of the Bible

by James Blaine Chapman

The Bible teaches that holiness is the central theme and that we can attain to a state of holiness in this world through the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Ezekiel 36:25, Romans 3:23, Galatians 2:20, 2 Timothy 3:16, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:9, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Holiness", "Redemption"

Description

James Blaine Chapman emphasizes the importance of storing the mind with Scripture texts and old hymns, highlighting how they become a valuable heritage over time. He stresses the significance of understanding the Bible in its entirety, focusing on holiness and redemption as central themes. Chapman delves into the moral and spiritual antipodes of sin and holiness, emphasizing the need to choose holiness for salvation. He explores the concept of atonement for sin, illustrating the dual process of pardon and cleansing through the finished work of Christ.

Transcript

It is a good thing to store the mind with scripture texts. If I were back again in my teens I think I would give more attention to memorizing the Bible and the old hymns of the Church. These become an increasing heritage as the years come and go. But to be fair with the Bible one must take it in its broad sense. That is, one must not get a preconceived idea and then go to the Bible for "proof texts." Rather, he must take the Bible in its general, as well as in its specific, statements.

Dr. Ellyson used to suggest that the name "Holy Bible" means simply "Book on Holiness." And that is what we find it to be. Of course there is a great deal about sin in the Bible, but sin is always condemned and holiness is exalted. There is a great deal about judgment, but mercy is the outstanding theme. After the first few chapters, which tell of sin's entrance into the world, all the rest of the Bible is given to redemption and salvation showing how to get rid of sin.

Sin and holiness are moral and spiritual antipodes, and one or the other must finally prevail. Sin and holiness cannot go on in mixed form forever. Either we must be saved from sin or sin will damn us forever. And this applies to all sin. There is no sin in heaven and no holiness in hell. This world is the place where we must make the abiding choice, and God proposes to allow our choice of sin to become fixed in impenitence or our choice of holiness to become effective by the power of His grace. This is the teaching of the whole tenor of the Scriptures.

Many of the types of the Old Testament are difficult. Some of them seem to us to be involved. But to the people to whom they were first given they were clearer than they are to us--clearer even than straight, unillustrated statements would have been. Take the camp life of the Israelites: They were to keep the camp itself clean by excluding lepers, and by the observance of the most rigid sanitary laws known in the world at that time. They were to keep their houses clean; they were to keep their bodies clean; and their menu included only such animals and birds as were known as clean for food and for sacrifice to God. All these things--insignificant some of them within themselves--united in making clear to the people of those and succeeding times the root idea of purity, so that when it was applied to the heart, men could immediately understand the significance of a heart entirely free from moral defilement. Indeed "the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed"--all this with reference to the Bible standard of heart and life.

Take the question of atonement for sin: Even the ancient sacrifices included the idea of cleansing as well as pardon. Sin was seen to be something deeper than guilt, although it included guilt. David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." This purging and washing reached farther than guilt for transgression and involved a purity that goes beyond the whiteness of snow. The flake of snow that seems so white may after all have a grain of dust at heart. But David would have a heart with no moral dirt at its center. And the minor prophet sang of a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem "for sin and for uncleanness." Sin is transgression of the law, but uncleanness is the root from which transgression springs. The fountain that flowed from the pierced side of the Lamb of God upon the Cross contained both water and blood, and was for sin as transgression and for sin as uncleanness.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy wounded side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure,

Save from wrath and make me pure.

Pardon of sin saves from wrath, and cleansing from inbred sin makes us pure. Then take the question of "the finished work" --that is, the change designated as the new birth and the further work designated as sanctification. Here again we meet with duality of process. There is a work of the Holy Spirit by which we are made alive unto God. Then there is a work by which we are crucified to the world and sin dies out within us. There is a work of the Spirit by which we are made new. Then there is a further or second work by which we are made clean. There is a distinction between a new heart in which there is yet contention between the Holy Spirit and the fleshly or sinful nature, and a clean heart in which the Holy Spirit reigns supremely and in which there is no longer any fleshly nature to contend.

And if any man question whether it is possible to attain to such a state of holiness in this world, let him remember that this is our world of probation, and that here the blood of Jesus was shed and here the Holy Spirit is poured out. Here all the conditions are possible and here all the propitiation of Christ and all the efficiency of the Holy Spirit are available. What merit can the future have that we do not have now? We

have the blood of Jesus. What more of merit can saints in heaven have? What power to renovate spirit can they have in heaven that we do not have here? We have the Holy Spirit, the infinite Refining Fire; what can they have in heaven that can be more efficient? The world is sinful! That is true, but "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Our own natures are depraved! True, but "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We are too unworthy and weak! True, but "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."

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