

# The Prerequisites of Holiness

by James Blaine Chapman

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*Sanctification is a second work of grace that requires a clean, definite condition of regeneration and a heart willing to obey God's will.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, John 17:9, Romans 6:19, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:7

**Topics:** "Sanctification", "Holiness"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into the theological distinctions between justification, regeneration, and adoption, emphasizing the prerequisites to holiness and the necessity of being restored to God's favor before seeking sanctification. He highlights the importance of being willing to obey God fully and walking in the light as conditions for cleansing and sanctification. Chapman stresses that those closest to God are the ones who first realize their need for sanctification, and encourages believers to claim their heritage and pray for refinement and sanctification.

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## Transcript

Serious Christians are wont to ask, "Why is sanctification a second work of grace? Why cannot God sanctify at the same instant in which He justifies?" The answer is that the limitations are all on the human side. Stated in simple language, men cannot be sanctified at the time when they are justified because some of the conditions necessary to sanctification cannot be met until after men are justified. This is why we speak of some things as prerequisites to (required before) holiness.

There is a distinction in theology between justification, regeneration, and adoption. Justification, the theologians say, takes place in the heart of God and is accomplished by His gracious act of pardoning the sins of the penitent sinner. Regeneration, the same authorities say, takes place in the heart of man, and is the work of the Holy Spirit in implanting the new spiritual life in the soul of the believing penitent. The new birth is just another term for the same experience. Adoption is the gracious act of God by which the alien is made a child, and this act is based upon the fact of regeneration. All this is theology. In actual experience whoever is justified is also regenerated and adopted. So for all practical purposes we may think of these three terms as synonyms, and the fact described is a definite prerequisite to holiness.

In His high priestly prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, our Lord prayed for the sanctification of His disciples, and in this connection He definitely said, "I pray not for the world." He could not in the nature of the case pray for the sanctification of the world. He prayed for the world indirectly when

He mentioned "them who shall believe on me through their word."

But those who are of the world must cease to be of the world before they are included in the prayer for sanctification.

It is evident, likewise, that backsliders are not in position to be sanctified. First they must be restored to the favor of God and the joy of salvation. Sanctification is by the will of God, and sinners and backsliders are rebels against God and disqualified for sharing in His will. When David sinned he came first (Psalms 51) and prayed for forgiveness and restoration, and then for cleansing and purity.

The preaching and testimony of holiness always act as genuine probers of motives and discoverers of state and relation. There is a difference between conviction for guilt and conviction for want. The sinner and backslider have conviction for guilt, but the justified believer has conviction for want. It may seem unnecessarily harsh to say it, but the fact still remains that just as dead people have no desire and sick people are usually wanting in appetite, so likewise the reason many are not set to seek and find holiness is that they are dead in trespasses and sin or sick and ailing in their spiritual lives.

Those who have explained that people who think they received the second blessing were merely backsliders, and when they were restored to the favor of God supposed they had something more than they ever had before, are altogether mistaken in their premises. It is always the Christians who are in the best state of justification who first realize their need of sanctification; and the divine plan, after all, is not to "bless the man who is nearest hell," as sometimes we are wont to pray at the beginning of the revival, but to begin first with the house of God, and by blessing those who are closest up make way for those who are farther back without doing violence to the moral and spiritual consistency and order.

Then the promise of cleansing is conditioned upon walking in the light. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This walking in the light means simply obeying God to the full measure of our knowledge of His will. It implies willing and glad obedience.

So we may summarize the prerequisites of holiness as (1) a clean, definite condition of regeneration, and (2) a heart that is willing to go all the way with God in all His revealed will. And when these two are considered together they become so closely united as to be almost one. It is essential to a clear state of justification to be ready and obedient. Reluctance and hesitation bring defeat and darkness. How is it with you today? Is your witness of sonship and acceptance with God bright and clear? Are you ready and willing to obey God in any and all things in which His will may be made known to you? Can you, as the poet would say, read your title clear to a mansion in the skies? If all this is descriptive of your state and relation, then you should have no hindrance in coming to God with prayer and faith to be "made every whit whole." There is a fullness in God's grace and mercy for you as a child of God. Do not be content without it. Claim your heritage. Lay hold upon the promise. Pray with the poet:

Refining Fire, go through my heart,

Illuminate my soul;

Scatter Thy life through every part,

And sanctify the whole.

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